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THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS

VOLUME II

By

EUGENE SUE

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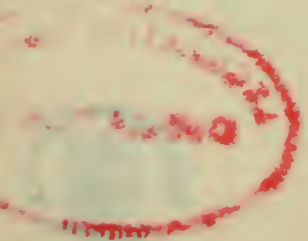

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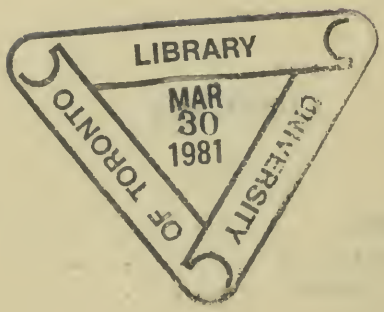
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THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS.

CHAPTER I.

THE TEMPLE.

To the deep snow which had fallen during the past night had succeeded a very sharp wind, so that the ordinarily muddy pavement was hard and dry, as Rigolette and Rodolph wended onwards to the immense and singular bazar called the Temple, the young girl leaning unceremoniously on the arm of her cavalier, who, on his part, appeared as much at his ease as though they had been old familiar friends.

"What a funny old woman Madame Pipelet is!" observed the grisette to her companion; "and what very odd things she says!"

"Well, I thought her remarks very striking, as well as appropriate."

"Which of them, neighbour?"

"Why, when she said 'Young people would be young people,' and '*Vive l'amour!*'"

"Well?"

"Well! I only mean to say those are precisely my sentiments."

"Your sentiments?"

"Yes, I should like nothing better than to pass my youth with you, taking '*Vive l'amour!*' for my motto.

"I dare say, for certainly you are not hard to please."

"Why, where would be the harm, — are we not near neighbours? Of course we are, or else I should not be seen walking out with you in this manner in broad day."

"Then you allow me to hope — "

"Hope what?"

"That you will learn to love me."

"Oh, bless you, I do love you already!"

"Really?"

"To be sure I do. Why, how can I help it? You are good and gay; though poor yourself, you have done all in your power by interesting rich people in the fate of the Morels; your appearance pleases me; and you have altogether a nice look, and a sort of air such as one is glad to find in a person we expect to go about with a great deal. So there, I think, are abundant reasons for my loving you."

Then, suddenly breaking into loud fits of laughter, Rigolette abruptly exclaimed, "Look there, only look at that fat woman with the furred shoes! What does she remind you of? I'll tell you, — of a great sack being drawn along by two cats without tails!" and again she laughed merrily.

"I would rather look at you, my pretty neighbour, than at all the fat old women or tailless cats in Europe. I am so delighted to find you already love me."

"I only tell you the truth; if I disliked you, I should speak just as plainly. I cannot reproach myself with ever having deceived or flattered any one; but, if a person pleases me, I tell them so directly."

Again interrupting the thread of her discourse, the grisette drew up suddenly before the windows of a shop, saying, "Oh, do pray only look at that pretty clock and those two handsome vases! I had already saved up three francs and a half, and had put it in my money-box, to buy such a set as that. In five or six years I might have been able to buy them."

"Saved up, do you say? Then, I suppose, you earn —"

"At least thirty sous a day, — sometimes forty; but I never reckon upon more than thirty, which is the more prudent; and I regulate all my expenses accordingly," said Rigolette, with an air as important as though she was settling the financial budget.

"But with thirty sous a day, how do you manage to live?"

"Oh, bless you! that is easily reckoned. Shall I tell you how I manage, neighbour? I fancy you are rather extravagant in your notions; so, perhaps, it may serve as a lesson for you."

"Yes, pray do."

"Well, then, thirty sous a day make five and forty francs a month, do they not?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, out of that I pay twelve francs for lodging; that leaves me twenty-three francs for food, etc."

"Is it possible? Twenty-three francs for one month's food!"

"Yes, really, all that! Certainly, for such a person as myself, it does seem an enormous sum; but then, you see, I deny myself nothing."

"Oh, you little glutton!"

"Ah! but then, remember, I include the food for both my birds in that sum."

"Certainly it seems less exorbitant, when you come to reckon, for three than for one; but just tell me how you manage day by day, that I may profit by your good example."

"Well, then, be attentive, and I will go over the different things I spend in it. First of all, one pound of bread, that costs four sous; then two sous' worth of milk make six; four sous' worth of vegetables in winter, or fruit and salad in summer, — I am very found of salad, because, like vegetables, it is such a nice clean thing to prepare, and does not soil the hands; there goes ten

sous at once; then three sous for butter, or oil and vinegar, to season the salad with, that makes thirteen sous; a pail of nice fresh water, — oh, I must have that! it is my principal extravagance, — that brings it to fifteen sous, don't you see? Then add two or three sous a week for chickweed and seed for my birds, who generally have part of my bread and milk; all this comes to exactly twenty-three francs a month, neither more nor less."

"And do you never eat meat?"

"Meat, indeed! I should think not. Why, it costs from ten to twelve sous a pound! A likely thing for me to buy! Besides, there is all the nuisance and smell of cooking; instead of which, milk, vegetables, or fruit, are always ready when you wish for them. I tell you what is a favourite dish of mine, without being troublesome to prepare, and which I excel in making."

"Oh, pray let me know what it is?"

"Why, I get some beautiful ripe, rosy apples, and put them at the top of my little stove; when they are quite tender, I bruise them with a little milk, and just a taste of sugar. It is a dish for an emperor. If you behave well, I will let you taste it some day."

"Prepared by your hands, it can scarcely fail being excellent; but let us keep to our reckoning. Let me see, we counted twenty-three francs for living, etc., and twelve francs for lodging; that makes thirty-five francs a month."

"Well, then, out of the forty-five or fifty francs I earn, there remains from ten to fifteen francs a month for my wood and oil during the winter, as well as for my clothes and washing; that is to say, for soap and other requisites; because, excepting my sheets, I wash my own things; that is another of my extravagances, — a good laundress would pretty well ruin me; while, as I am a very quick and good ironer, the expense is principally that of my own time. During the five winter months I burn a load and a half of wood, while I consume about four or five

sous' worth of oil for my lamp daily; that makes it cost me about eighty francs a year for fire and lights."

"So that you have, in fact, scarcely one hundred francs to clothe yourself, and find you in pocket money."

"No more; yet out of that sum I managed to save my three francs and a half."

"But your gowns, your shoes, — this smart little cap?"

"As for caps, I never wear one but when I go out, so that is not ruinous; and, at home, I go bareheaded. As for my gowns and boots, have I not got the Temple to go to for them?"

"Ah, yes, this convenient, handy Temple! So you buy there?"

"All sorts of pretty and excellent dresses. Why, only imagine, great ladies are accustomed to give their old, cast-off gowns, etc., to their maids. When I say old, I mean that, perhaps, they have worn them for a month or two, just to ride out in the carriage. Well, and then the ladies' maids sell them to the persons who have shops at the Temple for almost nothing. Just look at the nice dark merino dress I have on; well, I only gave fourteen francs for it, when, I make no doubt, it cost at least sixty, and had scarcely been put on. I altered it to fit myself; and I flatter myself it does me credit."

"Indeed, it does, and very great credit, too. Yes, I begin to see now, thanks to the Temple, you really may contrive to make a hundred francs a year suffice for your dress."

"To be sure; why, I can buy in the summer sweet pretty gowns for five or six francs; boots, like these I have on, and almost new, for two or three francs a pair; just look at my boots. Now, would not any one say they had been made for me?" said Rigolette, suddenly stopping, and holding up one of her pretty little feet,

really very nicely set off by the well-fitting boot she wore.

"It is, indeed, a charming foot; but you must have some difficulty in getting fitted. However, I suppose, at the Temple, they keep shoes and boots of all sizes, from a woman's to a child's."

"Ah, neighbour, I begin to find out what a terrible flatterer you are. However, after what I have told you, you must see now that a young girl, who is careful, and has only herself to keep, may manage to live respectably on thirty sous a day; to be sure, the four hundred and fifty francs I brought out of prison with me helped me on famously, for when people saw that I had my own furniture in my apartments, they felt more confidence in entrusting me with work to take home. I was some time, though, before I met with employment. Fortunately for me, I had kept by me as much money as enabled me to live three months without earning anything."

"Shall I own to you that, under so gay and giddy a manner, I scarcely expected to hear so much sound sense as that uttered by your pretty mouth, my good neighbour?"

"Ah! but let me tell you that, when one is all alone in the world, and has no wish to be under any obligation, it is quite necessary, as the proverb says, to mind how we build our nest, to take care of it when it is built."

"And certainly yours is as charming a nest as the most fastidious bird could desire."

"Yes, isn't it? for, as I say, I never refuse myself anything. Now, I consider my chamber as above my means; in fact, too handsome for one like me; then I have two birds; always, at least, two pots of flowers on my mantelpiece, without reckoning those on the window-ledges; and yet, as I told you, I had actually got three francs and a half in my money-box, towards

the ornaments I hoped some day to be able to buy for my mantelpiece."

"And what became of this store?"

"Oh, why, lately, when I saw the poor Morels so very, very wretched, I said to myself, 'What is the use of hoarding up these stupid pieces of money, and letting them lie idle in a money-box, when good and honest people are actually starving for want of them?' So I took out the three francs, and lent them to Morel. When I say lent, I mean I told him I only lent them, to spare his feelings; but, of course, I never meant to have them back again."

"Yes, but my dear neighbour, you cannot refuse to let them repay you, now they are so differently situated."

"Why, no; I think if Morel were to offer them to me now, I should not refuse them; it will, at any rate, enable me to begin my store for buying the chimney ornaments I do so long to possess. You would scarcely believe how silly I am; but I almost dream of a beautiful clock, such a one as I showed you just now, and two lovely vases, one on each side."

"But, then, you should think a little of the future."

"What future?"

"Suppose you were to be ill, for instance."

"Me ill? Oh, the idea!" And the fresh, hearty laugh of Rigolette resounded through the street.

"Well, why should you not be?"

"Do I look like a person likely to be sick?"

"Certainly I never saw a more bright or blooming countenance."

"Well, then, what could possibly have put it into your head to talk such nonsense as to suppose I could ever be ill?"

"Nay, but—"

"Why, I am only eighteen years of age, and, considering the sort of life I lead, there is no chance of such a thing. I rise at five o'clock, winter or summer; I am

never up after ten, or, at latest, eleven; I eat sufficient to satisfy my appetite, which certainly is not a very great one; I do not suffer from exposure to cold; I work all day, singing as merrily as a lark; and at night I sleep like a dormouse. My heart is free, light, and happy. My employers are so well satisfied with what I do for them, that I am quite sure not to want for work; so what is there for me to be ill about? It really is too amusing to hear you try to talk sense, and only utter nonsense! Me ill!" And, at the very absurdity of the idea, Rigolette again burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, so loud and prolonged that a stout gentleman who was walking before her, carrying a dog under his arm, turned around quite angrily, believing all this mirth was excited by his presence.

Resuming her composure, Rigolette slightly curtseyed to the stout individual, and pointing to the animal under his arm, said:

"Is your dog so very tired, sir?"

The fat man grumbled out some indistinct reply, and continued on his way.

"My dear neighbour," said Rodolph, "are you losing your senses?"

"It is your fault if I am."

"How so?"

"Because you talk such nonsense to me."

"Do you call my saying that perhaps you might be ill, talking foolishly?"

And, once more overcome by the irresistible mirth awakened by the absurdity of Rodolph's suggestion, Rigolette again relapsed into long and hearty fits of laughter; while Rodolph, deeply struck by this blind, yet happy reliance upon the future, felt angry with himself for having tried to shake it, though he almost shuddered as he pictured to himself the havoc a single month's illness would make in this peaceful mode of life. Then the implicit reliance entertained by Rigolette on the sta-

bility of her employ, and her youthful courage, her sole treasures, struck Rodolph as breathing the very essence of pure and contented innocence; for the confidence expressed by the young dressmaker arose neither from recklessness nor improvidence, but from an instinctive dependence and belief in that divine justice which would never forsake a virtuous and industrious creature, — a simple girl, whose greatest crime was in relying too confidently on the blessed gifts of youth and health, the precious boon of a heavenly benefactor. Do the birds of the air remember, as they flit on gay and agile wing amidst the blue skies of summer, or skim lightly over the sweet-smelling fields of blooming lucerne, that bleak, cold winter must follow so much enjoyment?

"Then," said Rodolph to the grisette, "it seems you have no wish for anything more than you already possess?"

"No, really I have not."

"Positively, nothing you desire?"

"No, I tell you. Stay, yes, now I recollect, there are those sweet pretty chimney ornaments; but I shall be sure to have them some of these days, though I do not know exactly when; but still, they do so run in my head, that, sooner than be disappointed, I will sit up all night to work."

"And besides these ornaments?"

"Oh, nothing more; no, I cannot recollect any one other thing I care for more especially now."

"Why now, particularly?"

"Because, yesterday, if you had asked me the same question, I should have replied, there was nothing I wanted more than an agreeable neighbour in your apartments, to give me an opportunity of showing all the little acts of kindness I have been accustomed to perform, and to receive nice little attentions in return."

"Well, but you know, my dear neighbour, we have already entered into an agreement to be mutually ser-

viceable to each other; you will look after my linen for me, and I shall clean up and polish your chamber for you; and besides attending to my linen, you are to wake me every morning early by tapping against the wainscot."

"And do you think you have named all I shall expect you to do?"

"What else can I do?"

"Oh, bless you, you have not yet come to the end of your services! Why, do you not intend to take me out every Sunday, either to the Boulevards or beyond the barriers? You know that is the only day I can enjoy a little pleasure."

"To be sure I do; and when summer comes we will go into the country."

"No, no, I hate the country! I cannot bear to be anywhere but in Paris. Yet I used, once upon a time, to go, out of good nature, with a young friend of mine, who was with me in prison, to visit Meudon and St. Germain. My friend was a very nice, good girl, and because she had such a sweet voice, and was always singing, people used to call her the Goualeuse."

"And what has become of her?"

"I don't know. She spent all the money she brought with her out of prison, without seeming to have much pleasure for it; she was inclined to be mournful and serious, though kind and sympathising to every one. At the time we used to go out together I had not met with any work to do, but directly I procured employment, I never allowed myself a holiday. I gave her my address, but, as she never came to see me, I suppose she, like myself, was too busy to spare the time. But I dare say you don't care to hear any more about her; I only mentioned it because I wanted to show you that it is no use asking me to go into the country with you, for I never did, and never will go there, except with the young friend I was telling you about; but whenever you can

afford to take me out to dinner or to the play, I shall be quite ready to accompany you, and when it does not suit you to spend the money, or when you have none to spend, why then we will take a walk, and have a good look at the shops, which is almost the nicest thing I know, unless it is buying at them. And I promise you, you shall have no reason to feel ashamed of my appearance, let us go out among ever such company. Oh, when I wear my dark blue levantine silk gown, I flatter myself I *do* look like somebody! It is such a love of a dress, and fits me so beautifully! I never wear it but on Sundays, and then I put on such a love of a lace cap, trimmed with shaded orange-colour riband, which looks so well with dark hair like mine; then I have some such elegant boots of satin hue, made for me, not bought at the Temple! And last of all comes such a shawl! Oh, neighbour, I doubt if you ever walked with any one in such perfect beauty; it is a real *bourre-de-soie*, in imitation of cashmere. I quite expect we shall be stared at and admired by every one as we go along; the men will look back as they pass me, and say, 'Upon my word that's an uncommon pretty-looking girl, — she is, 'pon honour!' Then the women will cry, 'What a stylish-looking man! Do you see that tall, thin person? I declare, he has such a fashionable appearance that he might pass as somebody if he liked; what a becoming and handsome moustachio he has!' And between ourselves, neighbour, I quite agree with these remarks, and especially about the moustachio, for I dearly love to see a man wear them. Unfortunately M. Germain did not wear a moustachio, on account of the situation he held; I believe his employer did not permit his young men to wear them. To be sure, M. Cabrion did wear moustachios, but then, his were quite red, like his great bushy beard, and I hate those huge beards; and besides, I did not like Cabrion for two other reasons; one was, he used to play all kinds of scampish tricks out in the

street, and the other thing I disliked was his tormenting poor old Pipelet as he did. Certainly, M. Giraudeau, the person who lived next to me before M. Cabrion, was rather a smart-looking man, and dressed very well; but then he squinted, and at first that used to put me out very much, because he always seemed to be looking past me at some one by my side, and I always found myself, without thinking of it, turning around to see who it could be."

And here Rigolette indulged in another peal of merry laughter.

As Rodolph listened to all this childish and voluble talk, he felt almost at a loss how to estimate the pretensions of the grisette to be considered of first-rate prudence and virtue; sometimes the very absence of all reserve in her communications, and the recollection of the great bolt on her door, made him conclude that she bore a general and platonic affection only for every occupant of the chamber adjoining her own, and that her interest in them was nothing more than that of a sister; but again he smiled at the credulity which could believe such a thing possible, when the unprotected condition of the young dressmaker, and the fascinations of Messrs. Giraudeau, Cabrion, and Germain were taken into account. Still, the frankness and originality of Rigolette made him pause in the midst of his doubts, and refuse to allow him to judge harshly of the ingenuous and light-hearted being who tripped beside him.

"I am delighted at the way you have disposed of my Sundays," said Rodolph, gaily. "I see plainly we shall have some capital treats."

"Stop a little, Mr. Extravagance, and let me tell you how I mean to regulate our expenses; in the summer we can dine beautifully, either at the Chartreuse or the Montmartre hermitage, for three francs, then half a dozen quadrilles or waltzes, and a ride upon the wooden horses, — oh, I do so love riding on horseback! — well,

that will bring it altogether to about five francs, not a farthing more, I assure you. Do you waltz?"

"Yes, very well."

"I am glad of that. M. Cabrion always trod on my toes, so that he quite put me out; and then, too, by way of a joke, he used to throw fulminating balls about on the ground; so at last the people at the Chartreuse would not allow us to be admitted there."

"Oh, I promise you to be very well behaved whenever we are met together; and as for the fulminating balls, I promise you never to have anything to do with them; but when winter comes, how shall we manage then?"

"Why, in the winter we shall be able to dine very comfortably for forty sous. I think people never care so much for eating in the winter as summer; so then we shall have three francs left to pay for our going to the play, for I shall not allow you to exceed a hundred sous for the whole of our expenses, and that is a great deal of money to spend in pleasure; but then, if you were out alone, it would cost you much more at the tavern or billiard-rooms, where you would only meet a parcel of low, ignorant men, smelling of tobacco enough to choke you. Is it not much better for you to pass a pleasant day with a nice little, cheerful, good-tempered companion, who, in return for the holiday you so agreeably pass with her, will contrive to make up the extra expense she costs you by hemming your handkerchiefs, and looking after your domestic affairs?"

"Nothing can be more advantageous, as far as I am concerned; but suppose any of my friends should meet me walking with my pretty neighbour, what then?"

"What then! Why, they would just look at you, and then at me; and then they would smile and say, 'That's a lucky fellow, that Rodolph!'"

"You know my name, do you?"

"Why, of course, when I heard that the chamber ad-

joining mine was let, I inquired the name of the person who had taken it."

"Yes, I dare say every one who met us out together would remark, as you observe, what a lucky fellow I was; then the next thing would be to envy me."

"So much the better."

"They would believe I was perfectly happy."

"Of course, of course they would."

"All the while I should only be so in appearance."

"Well, what does that signify? As long as people think you happy, what does it matter whether you are really so or not? Men neither require nor care for more than outward show."

"But your reputation might suffer."

Rigolette burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

"The reputation of a grisette!" said she. "Do you suppose that any person believes in such a phenomenon? Ah, if I had either father, mother, brother, or sister, for their sakes I should fear what people might say of me, and be anxious about the world's opinion; but I am alone in the world, and have no person to consider but myself, so, while I know myself to be free from blame or reproach, I care not for what any one may say of me, or think either."

"But still I should be very unhappy."

"What for?"

"To pass for being a happy as well as a lucky fellow, when, after the fashion of Papa Crétu's dinner, I should be expected to make a meal off a dry crust, while all the tempting dishes contained in a cookery-book were being read to me."

"Oh, nonsense! you will be quite contented to live as I describe. You will find me so grateful for every little act of kindness, so easily pleased, and so little troublesome, that I know you will say, 'Why, after all, I may as well spend my Sunday with her as with any one else.' If you have any time in the evening, and have no objec-

tion to come and sit with me, you can have the use of my fire and light. If it would not tire you to read aloud, you would amuse me by reading some nice novel or romance. Better do that than lose your money at cards or billiards; otherwise, if you are occupied at your office, or prefer going to a café, you can just bid me good night when you come in, if I happen still to be up; but should I have gone to bed, why then I will wish you good morning at an early hour next day, by tapping against your wainscot to awaken you. Why, M. Germain, my last fellow lodger, used to pass all his evenings with me in that manner, and never complained of their being dull. He read me all Walter Scott's novels in the course of the winter, which was really very amusing. Sometimes, when it chanced to be a wet Sunday, he would go and buy something at the pastry-cook's, and we used to have a nice little dinner in my room; and afterwards we amused ourselves with reading; and we liked that almost as well as going to the theatre. You see by this that I am not hard to please, but, on the contrary, am always ready to do what I can to make things pleasant and agreeable. And then you were talking about illness. Oh, if ever you should be ill, then, indeed, I should be a comfort to you, a real Sister of Charity! Only ask the Morels what sort of a nurse I am. You don't half know your own good fortune, M. Rodolph; you have drawn a real prize in the lottery of good luck to have me for a neighbour, I can assure you."

"I quite agree with you; but I always was lucky. Apropos of your late fellow lodger, M. Germain, where is he at present?"

"In Paris, I believe."

"Then you do not see much of him now?"

"No, he has never been to see me since he quitted the house."

"But where is he living? And what is he doing at present?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"Because," said Rodolph, smiling, "I am jealous of him, and I wish —"

"Jealous!" exclaimed Rigolette, bursting into a fit of laughter. "La, bless you, there is no occasion for that, poor fellow!"

"But, seriously, my good neighbour, I wish most particularly to obtain M. Germain's address, or to be enabled to meet him. You know where he lives; and without any boast, I think I have good reason to expect you would trust me with the secret of his residence, and to believe me quite incapable of revealing again the information I ask of you, assuring you most solemnly it is for his own interest more than mine I am solicitous of finding him."

"And seriously, my good neighbour, although it is probable and possible your intentions towards M. Germain are as you report them, I am not at liberty to give you the address of M. Germain, he having strictly and and expressly forbidden my so doing to any person whatever; therefore, when I refuse to tell *you*, you may be quite sure it is because I really am not at liberty to do so; and that ought not to make you feel offended with me. If you had entrusted me with a secret, you would be pleased, would you not, to have me as careful of it, and determined not to reveal it, as I am about M. Germain's affair?"

"Nay, but —"

"Neighbour, once and for all, do not say anything more on this subject. I have made a promise which I will keep faithfully and honourably; so now you know my mind, and if you ask me a hundred times, I shall answer you just the same."

Spite of her thoughtlessness and frivolity, the young dressmaker pronounced these last words with so much firmness that, to his great regret, Rodolph perceived the impossibility of gaining the desired information respect-

ing Germain through her means; and his mind revolted at the idea of laying any snare to entrap her into a betrayal of her secret; he therefore, after a slight pause, gaily replied:

"Well, let us say no more about it, then; but, upon my life, I don't wonder at you, who can so well keep the secrets of others, guarding your own so closely."

"Me have secrets?" cried Rigolette. "I only wish I had some more secrets of my own; it must be very amusing to have secrets."

"Do you really mean to assert that you have not a 'nice little secret' about some love-affair?"

"Love-affair!"

"Are you going to persuade me you have never been in love?" said Rodolph, looking fixedly at Rigolette, the better to read the truth in her telltale features.

"Been in love? Why, of course I have, with M. Giraudeau, M. Cabrion, M. Germain, and you!"

"Are you sure you loved them just as you do me, neither more nor less?"

"Oh, really, I cannot tell you so very exactly! If anything, I should say less; because I had to become accustomed to the squinting eyes of M. Giraudeau, the disagreeable jokes and red beard of M. Cabrion, and the low spirits and constant dejection of M. Germain, for the poor young man was very sad, and always seemed to have a heavy load on his mind, while you, on the contrary, took my fancy directly I saw you."

"Come now, my pretty neighbour, you must not be angry with me; I am going to speak candidly and sincerely, like an old friend."

"Oh, don't be afraid to say anything to me; I am very good-natured; and besides, I feel certain you are too kind; you could never have the heart to say anything to me that would give me pain."

"You are quite right; but do tell me truly, have you never had any lovers?"

"Lovers! I should think not! What time have I for such things?"

"What has time got to do with it?"

"Why, everything, to be sure. In the first place, I should be jealous as a tigress; and I should be continually worrying myself with one idea or another; and let me ask you whether you think it is likely I could afford to lose two or three hours a day in fretting and grieving. And then, suppose my lover were to turn out false! Oh, what tears it would cost me; how wretched I should be! All that sort of thing would put me sadly behindhand with my work, I can tell you."

"Well, but all lovers are not faithless and a cause of grief and sorrow to their mistress."

"Oh, bless you! It would be still worse for me, if he were all goodness and truth. Why, then I should not be able to live without him for a single hour; and as most probably he would be obliged to remain all day in his office, or shop, or manufactory, I should be like some poor, restless spirit all the time of his absence. I should imagine all sorts of things, picture to myself his being at that moment pleasantly engaged in company with one he loved better than myself. And then, if he forsook me, oh, Heaven only knows what I might be tempted to do in my despair, or what might become of me. One thing is very certain, that my work would suffer for it; and then what should I do? Why, quietly as I live at present, it is much as I can manage to live by working from twelve to fifteen hours a day. Where should I be, if I were to lose three or four days a week by tormenting myself? How could I ever catch up all that time? Oh, I never could; it would be quite impossible! I should be obliged, then, to take a situation, to live under the control of a mistress; but no, no, I will never bring myself to that, — I love my liberty too well."

"Your liberty?"

"Yes, I might go as forewoman to the person who

keeps the warehouse for which I work; she would give me four hundred francs a year, with board and lodging."

"And you will not accept it?"

"No, indeed! I should then be the slave and servant of another; whereas, however humble my home, at least there is no one there to control me. I am free to come and go as I please. I owe nothing to any one. I have good health, good courage, good heart, and good spirits; and now that I can say a good neighbour also, what is there left to desire?"

"Then you have never thought of marriage?"

"Marriage, indeed! Why, what would be the use of my thinking about it, when, poor as I am, I could not expect to meet with a husband better off than myself? Look at the poor Morels; just see the consequences of burthening yourself with a family before you have the means of providing for one; whilst, so long as there is only oneself to provide for, one can always manage somehow."

"And do you never build castles in the air? — never dream?"

"Dream? Oh, yes! — of my chimney ornaments; but, besides them, what can I have to wish for?"

"But, suppose now some relation you never heard of in your life were to die, and leave you a nice little fortune — twelve hundred francs a year, for instance — you have made five hundred sufficient to supply all your wants?"

"Perhaps it might prove a good thing; perhaps a bad one."

"How could it be a bad one?"

"Because I am happy and contented as I am; but I do not know what I might be if I came to be rich. I can assure you that, when, after a hard day's work, I go to bed in my own snug little room, when my lamp is extinguished, and by the glimmer of the few cinders left in my stove I see my neat, clean little apartment, my

curtains, my chest of drawers, my chairs, my birds, my watch, my table covered with the work confided to me, left all ready to begin the first thing in the morning, and I say to myself, all this is mine, — I have no one to thank for it but myself, — oh, neighbour, the very thoughts lull me into such a happy state of mind that I fall asleep believing myself the most fortunate creature on earth to be so surrounded with comforts. But, I declare, here we are at the Temple! You must own it is a beautiful object?"

Although not partaking of the profound admiration expressed by Rigolette at the first glimpse of the Temple, Rodolph was, nevertheless, much struck by the singular appearance of this enormous bazar with its many diverging passages and dependencies. Towards the middle of the Rue du Temple, not far from the fountain which stands in the corner of a large square, may be seen an immense parallelogram, built of wood, and surmounted with a slated roof. This building is the Temple, bounded on the left by the Rue du Petit Thouars, and on the right by the Rue Percée; it leads to a large circular building, — a colossal rotunda, surrounded with a gallery, forming a sort of arcade. A long opening, intersecting this parallelogram in its length and breadth, divides it into two equal parts, which are again divided and subdivided into an infinity of small lateral and transverse openings, crossing each other in all directions, and sheltered by the roof of the building from all severity of weather. In this bazar new merchandise is generally prohibited; but the smallest fragment of any sort of material, the merest morsel of iron, brass, lead, or pewter, will here find both a buyer and a seller.

Here are to be found dealers in pieces of every coloured cloth, of all ages, qualities, shades, and capabilities, for the service of such as wish to repair or alter damaged or ill-fitting garments. Some of the shops present huge piles of old shoes, some trodden down of heel,

others twisted, torn, worn, split, and in holes, presenting a mass of nameless, formless, colourless objects, among which are grimly visible some species of fossil soles about an inch thick, studded with thick nails, resembling the door of a prison and hard as a horse's hoof, the actual skeletons of shoes whose other component parts have long since been consumed by the devouring hand of Time. Yet all this mouldy, dried up accumulation of decaying rubbish will find a willing purchaser, an extensive body of merchants trading in this particular line.

Then there are the vendors of gimps, fringes, bindings, cords, tassels, and edgings of silk, cotton, or thread, arising out of the demolition of curtains past all cure and defying all reparation. Other enterprising individuals devote themselves to the sale of females' hats and bonnets, these articles only reaching their emporium by the means of the dealers in old clothes, and after having performed the strangest journeys and undergone the most surprising transformations, the most singular changes of colour.

In order that the article traded in may not take up too much room in a warehouse ordinarily the size of a large box, these bonnets are carefully folded in half, then flattened and laid upon each other as closely as they can be packed, with the exception of the brim. They are treated in every respect the same as herrings, requiring to be stowed in a cask. By these means it is almost incredible what a quantity of these usually fragile articles may be accommodated in a small space of about four feet square.

Should a purchaser present himself, the various specimens are removed from the high pressure to which they have been exposed, the vendor, with a *dégagé* air, gives the crown a dexterous blow with his fist, which makes the centre rise to its accustomed situation, then presses the front out upon his knee, concluding by holding up,

with an air of intense satisfaction at his own ingenuity, an object so wild, so whimsical, and withal so irresistibly striking, as to remind one of those traditional costumes ascribed for ages past to fishwomen, apple-women, or any whose avocation involves the necessity of carrying a basket on the head.

Farther on, at the sign of the Goût du Jour, beneath the arcades of the Rotunda, elevated at the end of the large opening which intersects the Temple and divides it into two parts, are suspended myriads of vestments of all colours, forms, and fashions, even more various and extraordinary in their respective styles than the bonnets just described. There may be seen stylish coats of unbleached linen, adorned with three rows of brass buttons *à la hussarde*, and sprucely ornamented with a small fur collar of fox-skin; great-coats, originally bottle-green, but changed, by age and service, to the hue of the pistachio nut, edged with black braid, and set off with a bright flaming lining of blue and yellow plaid, giving quite a fresh and youthful appearance, and producing the most genteel and tasty effect; coats that, when new, bore the appellation, as regards their cut, of being *à queue de Morue*, of a dark drab colour, with velvet, shag, or plush collar, and further decorated with buttons, once silver-gilt, but now changed to a dull coppery hue. In the same emporium may be observed sundry pelisses or polonaises of maroon-coloured cloth, with cat-skin collar, trimmed with braiding, and rich in brandenburgs, tassels, and cords. Not far from these are displayed a great choice of dressing-gowns most artistically constructed out of old cloaks, whose triple collars and capes have been removed, the inside lined with remnants of printed cotton, the most in request being blue or dark green, made up here and there with pieces of various distinct shades, and embroidered with old braid, and lined with red cotton, on which is traced a flowing design in vivid orange, collar and cuffs similarly adorned; a cord for

the waist, made out of an old bell-rope, serves as a finish to these elegant *déshabillés* so exultingly worn by Robert Macaire. We shall briefly pass over a mass of costumes more or less uncouth, in the midst of which may be found some real and authentic relics of royalty or greatness, dragged by the revolution of time from the palaces of the rich and mighty to the dingy shelves of the Rotunda of the Temple.

These displays of old shoes, hats, and coats are the grotesque parts of the bazar,— the place where rags and faded finery seek to set up their claim to notice. But it must be allowed, or rather distinctly asserted, that the vast establishment we are describing is of immense utility to the poor or persons in mediocre circumstances. There they may purchase, at an amazing decrease of price, most excellent articles, nearly new, and whose wear has been little or none. One side of the Temple was devoted to articles of bedding, and contained piles of blankets, sheets, mattresses, and pillows. Farther on were carpets, curtains, every description of useful household utensil. Close at hand were stores of wearing apparel, shoes, stockings, caps, and bonnets, for all ages, as well as all classes and conditions.

All these articles were scrupulously clean and devoid of anything that could offend or shock the most fastidious person. Those who have never visited this bazar will scarcely credit in how short a space of time, and with how little money, a cart may be filled with every requisite for the complete fitting out of two or three utterly destitute families.

Rodolph was particularly struck with the manner, at once attentive, eager, and cheerful, of the various dealers, as, standing at the door of their shops, they solicited the patronage and custom of the passers-by. Their mode of address, at once familiar and respectful, seemed altogether unlike the tone of the present day. Scarcely had Rigolette and her companion entered that part of the

place devoted to the sale of bedding, than they were surrounded by the most seducing offers and solicitations.

"Walk in, sir, and look at my mattresses, if you please," said one. "They are quite new. I will just open a corner to show you how beautifully white and soft the wool is, — more like the wool of a lamb than a sheep."

"My pretty lady, step in and see my beautiful, fine white sheets. They are better than new, for the first stiffness has been taken out of them. They are soft as a glove, and strong as iron."

"Come, my new-married couple, treat yourselves to one of my handsome counterpanes. Only see how soft, light, and warm it is, — quite as good as eider-down, — every bit the same as new, — never been used twenty times. Now, then, my good lady, persuade your husband to treat you to one. Let me have the pleasure of serving you, and I will fit you up for housekeeping as cheaply as you can desire. Oh, you'll be pleased, I know, — you'll come again to see Mother Bouvard! You will find I keep everything. I bought a splendid lot of second-hand goods yesterday. Pray walk in and let me have the pleasure of showing them to you. Come, you may as well see if you don't buy. I shall charge you nothing for looking at them."

"I tell you what, neighbour," said Rodolph to Rigolette, "this fat old lady shall have the preference. She takes us for husband and wife. I am so pleased with her for the idea that I decide upon laying out my money at her shop."

"Well, then, let it be the fat old lady," said Rigolette. "I like her appearance, too."

Rigolette and her companion then went into Mother Bouvard's. By a magnanimity, perhaps unexampled before in the Temple, the rivals of Mother Bouvard made no disturbance at the preference awarded to her One of her neighbours, indeed, went so far as to say:

"So long as it is Mother Bouvard, and no one else, that has this customer; she has a family, and is the dowager and the honour of the Temple."

It was, indeed, impossible to have a face more prepossessing, more open, and more frank than that of the dowager of the Temple.

"Here, my pretty little woman," she said to Rigolette, who was looking at sundry articles with the eye of a connoisseur, "this is the second-hand bargain I told you of: two bed furnitures and bedding complete, and as good as new. If you would like a small old *secrétaire* very cheap, here is one (and Mother Bouvard pointed to one). I had it in the same lot. I do not usually buy furniture, but I could not refuse this, for the poor people of whom I had it appeared to be so very unhappy! Poor lady! it was the sale of this piece of furniture which seemed to cut her to the very heart. I dare say it was a family piece of 'furniture.'"

At these words, and whilst the shopkeeper was settling with Rigolette as to the prices of the various articles of purchase, Rodolph was attentively looking at the *secrétaire* which Mother Bouvard had pointed out. It was one of those ancient pieces of rosewood furniture, almost triangular in shape, closed by a front panel, which let down, and, supported by two long brass hinges, served for a writing-table. In the centre of this panel, which was inlaid with ornaments of wood of different patterns, Rodolph observed a cipher let in, of ebony, and which consisted of an M. and an R., intertwined and surmounted with a count's coronet. He conjectured, therefore, that the last possessor of this piece of furniture was a person in an elevated rank of society. His curiosity increased, and he looked at the *secrétaire* with redoubled scrutiny; he opened the drawers mechanically, one after the other, when, having some difficulty in drawing out the last, and trying to discover the obstacle, he perceived, and drew carefully out, a sheet of paper, half shut up between the

drawer and the bottom of the opening. Whilst Rigolette was concluding her bargain with Mother Bouvard, Rodolph was engrossed in examining what he had found. From the numerous erasures which covered this paper, he perceived that it was the copy of an unfinished letter. Rodolph, with considerable difficulty, made out what follows:

"Sir: Be assured that the most extreme misery alone could compel me to the step which I now take. It is not mistaken pride which causes my scruples, but the absolute want of any and every claim on you for the service which I am about to ask. The sight of my daughter, reduced, as well as myself, to the most frightful destitution, has made me throw aside all hesitation. A few words only as to the cause of the misfortunes which have overwhelmed me. After the death of my husband, all my fortune was three hundred thousand francs (12,000*l.*), which was placed by my brother with M. Jacques Ferrand, the notary; I received at Angers, whither I had settled with my daughter, the interest of this sum, remitted to me by my brother. You know, sir, the horrible event which put an end to his days. Ruined, as it seems, by secret and unfortunate speculations, he put an end to his existence eight months since. After this sad event, I received a few lines, written by him in desperation before this awful deed. 'When I should peruse them,' he wrote, 'he should no longer exist.' He terminated this letter by informing me that he had not any acknowledgment of the sum which he had placed, in my name, with M. Jacques Ferrand, as that individual never gave any receipt, but was honour and piety itself; that, therefore, it would be sufficient for me to present myself to that gentleman, and my business would be regularly and satisfactorily adjusted. As soon as I was able to turn my attention to anything besides the mournful end of my poor brother, I came to Paris, where I knew no one, sir, but yourself, and you only by the connection that had subsisted between yourself and my husband. I have told you that the sum deposited with M. Jacques Ferrand was my entire fortune, and that my brother forwarded to me every six months the interest which arose from that sum. More than a year had elapsed since the last payment, and, consequently, I went to M. Jacques Ferrand to ask the amount of him, as I was greatly in want of it. Scarcely was I in his presence, than, without any consideration of my grief, he accused my brother of having borrowed two thousand francs of him, which he had lost by his death, adding, that not only was suicide a

crime before God and man, but, also, that it was an act of robbery, of which he, M. Jacques Ferrand, was the victim. I was indignant at such language, for the remarkable probity of my poor brother was well known; he had, it is true, unknown to me and his friends, lost his fortune in hazardous speculations, but he had died with an unspotted reputation, deeply regretted by all, and not leaving any debt except to his notary. I replied to M. Ferrand, that I authorised him at once to take the two thousand francs, which he claimed from my brother, from the three hundred thousand francs of mine, which had been deposited with him. At these words, he looked at me with an air of utter astonishment, and asked me what three hundred thousand francs I alluded to. 'To those which my brother placed in your hands eighteen months ago, sir, and of which I have, till now, received the interest paid by you through my brother,' I replied, not comprehending his question. The notary shrugged his shoulders, smiled disdainfully, as if my words were not serious, and replied that, so far from depositing any money with him, my brother had borrowed two thousand francs from him.

"It is impossible for me to express to you my horror at this reply. 'What, then, has become of this sum?' I exclaimed. 'My daughter and myself have no other resource, and, if we are deprived of that, nothing remains for us but complete wretchedness. What will become of us?' 'I really don't know,' replied the notary, coldly. 'It is most probable that your brother, instead of placing this sum with me, as you say, has used it in those unfortunate speculations in which, unknown to any one, he was engaged.' 'It is false, sir!' I exclaimed. 'My brother was honour itself, and, so far from despoiling me and my daughter, he would have sacrificed himself for us. He would never marry, in order that he might leave all he had to my child.' 'Dare you to assert, madame, that I am capable of denying a deposit confided in me?' inquired the notary, with indignation, which seemed so honourable and sincere that I replied, 'No, certainly not, sir; your reputation for probity is well known; but yet I can never accuse my brother of so cruel an abuse of confidence.' 'What are your proofs of this claim?' inquired M. Ferrand. 'I have none, sir. Eighteen months since, my brother, who undertook the management of my affairs, wrote to me, saying, "I have an excellent opportunity of obtaining six per cent.; send me your power of attorney to sell your stock, and I will deposit the three hundred thousand francs, which I will make up, with M. Jacques Ferrand, the notary." I sent the papers which he asked for to my brother, and a few days afterwards he informed me that the investment was made by you, and at the end of six months he

remitted to me the interest due.' 'At least, then, you have some letters on this subject, madame?' 'No, sir; they were only on family matters, and I did not preserve them.' 'Unfortunately, madame, I cannot do anything in this matter,' replied the notary. 'If my honesty was not beyond all suspicion, all attack, I should say to you, the courts of law are open to you, — attack me; the judges will have to choose between the word of an honourable man, who for thirty years has had the esteem of worthy men, and the posthumous declaration of a man who, after being ruined in most foolish undertakings, has found refuge only in suicide. I say to you now, attack me, madame, if you dare, and your brother's memory will be dishonoured! But I believe you will have the good sense to resign yourself to a misfortune which, no doubt, is very severe, but to which I am an entire stranger.' 'But, sir, I am a mother! If my fortune is lost, my daughter and I have nothing left but a small stock of furniture; if that is sold, we have nothing left, sir, — nothing, but the most frightful destitution staring us in the face.' 'You have been cheated, — it is a misfortune, but I can do nothing in the matter,' answered the notary. 'Once more, madame, your brother has deceived you. If you doubt between his word and mine, attack me; go to law, and the judges will decide.' I quitted the notary's in the deepest despair. What could I do in this extremity? I had no means of proving the validity of my claim; I was convinced of the strict honour of my brother, and confounded at the assertion of M. Ferrand, and having no person to whom I could turn for advice (for you were travelling), and knowing that I must have money to pay for legal opinions and advice, and desiring to preserve the very little that I had left, I dared not commence a suit at law. It was at this juncture — "

This sketch of the letter ended here, for what followed was covered with ink erasures, which completely blotted out the lines. At the bottom of the page, and in the corner, Rodolph found this kind of memorandum:

"To write to the Duchesse de Lucenay, for M. de Saint-Remy."

Rodolph remained deeply thoughtful after the perusal of this fragment of a letter, in which he had found two names whose connection struck him. Although the fresh infamy which appeared to accuse Jacques Ferrand was not proved, yet this man had proved himself so pitiless towards the unhappy Morel, had behaved so shamefully

to Louise, his daughter, that the denial of a deposit, protected by certain impunity, on the part of such a wretch, appeared to him by no means improbable. This mother, who claimed a fortune which had disappeared so strangely, was, doubtless, used to a life of ease and comfort. Ruined by a sudden blow, and knowing no one in Paris, as the letter said, what must have been the existence of these two females, perhaps utterly destitute and alone in the midst of this vast metropolis!

The prince had, as we know, promised sure occupation to madame, by giving her accidentally, and to employ her mind, a part to play in some future work of charity, being certain to find sure misery for her to curtail before his next meeting with that lady. He thought that, perhaps, chance might bring before him some unfortunate and worthy person, who would, as he trusted, interest the heart and imagination of Madame d'Harville. The sketch of the letter which he held in his hands, and the copy of which had, doubtless, never been sent to the person whose assistance was implored, evinced a high and resigned mind, which would revolt from an offer of alms. So, then, how many precautions, how many plans, how much delicacy, must be employed to conceal the source of such generous succour, or to make it accepted! And, then, how much address to introduce oneself to such a female, in order to judge if she really merited the interest which she seemed capable of inspiring! Rodolph foresaw in the development of this mysterious affair a multitude of new and touching emotions, which would singularly attract Madame d'Harville in the way he had previously proposed to her.

"Well, husband," said Rigolette, gaily, to Rodolph, "what is there so interesting in that piece of paper, which you are reading there?"

"My little wife," replied Rodolph, "you are very inquisitive; I will tell you by and by. Have you bought all you want?"

"Yes; and your poor friends will be set up like kings. There is nothing to do now but to pay; Madame Bouvard has made every allowance, I must do her that credit."

"My little wife, an idea occurs to me; whilst I am paying, suppose you go and choose the clothes for Madame Morel and her children? I confess my ignorance on the subject of such purchases. You can tell them to bring everything here, and then all the things will be together, and the poor people will have everything at once."

"You are right, husband. Wait here, and I shall not be long; I know two shopkeepers here, where I am a regular customer, and I shall find in their shops all I require."

And Rigolette went out, saying:

"Madame Bouvard, take care of my husband, and do not flirt with him, mind, whilst I am gone."

And then came the laugh, and away the merry maiden ran.

"I must say, sir," said Mother Bouvard to Rodolph, "that you have a capital little manager there. *Peste!* she knows how to make a bargain! And then she is so prettily behaved and pretty-looking! red and white, with those large, beautiful black eyes, and such hair!"

"Is she not charming? and ain't I a happy husband, Madame Bouvard?"

"As happy a husband as she is a wife, I am sure of that."

"You are not mistaken. But tell me how much I owe you."

"Your little lady would only give me three hundred and thirty francs for the whole; as true as heaven's above us, I only make fifteen francs by the bargain, for I did not try to get the things as cheaply as I might, for I hadn't the heart to bate 'em down; the people who sold 'em seemed so uncommon miserable!"

"Really! Were they the same people that you bought this little *secrétaire* of?"

"Yes, sir; and it cuts my heart to think of it! Only imagine, the day before yesterday there came here a young and still pretty girl, but so pale and thin one could almost see through her; and you know that pains people that have any feeling at all. Although she was, as they say, neat as a new-made pin, her old threadbare black worsted shawl, her black stuff gown, which was also worn bare, her straw bonnet, in the month of January, for she was in mourning, all showed what we call great distress, for I am sure she was a real lady. At last, blushing up to the very eyes, she asked me if I would buy two beds and bedding complete, and a little old *secrétaire*. I said that, as I sold, of course I bought, and that if they would suit me I would have them, but that I must see the things. She then asked me to go with her to her apartment, not far off, on the other side of the Boulevards, in a house on the Quay of St. Martin's Canal. I left my niece in the shop, and followed the lady until we reached a smallish house at the bottom of a court; we went up to the fourth floor, and, the lady having knocked, the door was opened by a young girl about fourteen years of age, who was also in mourning, and equally pale and thin, but still very, very pretty, so much so that I was quite astonished."

"Well, and this young girl?"

"Was the daughter of the lady in mourning. Though it was very cold, yet a thin gown of black cotton with white spots, and a small, shabby mourning shawl, that was all she had on her."

"And their rooms were wretched?"

"Imagine, sir, two little rooms, very neat, but nearly empty, and so cold that I was almost froze; there was not a spark of fire in the grate, nor any appearance of there having been any for a very long time. All the furniture was two beds, two chairs, a chest of drawers,

an old portmanteau, and the small *secrétaire*, and on the chest was a parcel, wrapped in a pocket-handkerchief. This small parcel was all the mother and child had left when their furniture was once sold. The landlord had taken the two bedsteads, the chairs, a trunk, and a table, for what was due to him, as the porter said, who had gone up-stairs with us. Then the lady begged me fairly to estimate the mattresses, sheets, curtains, and quilts; and, as I am an honest woman, sir, although it is my business to buy cheap and sell dear, yet, when I saw the poor young thing with her eyes full of tears, and her mother, who, in spite of her affected calmness, seemed to be weeping in her heart, I offered for the things fifteen francs more than they were worth to sell again, I swear I did; I agreed, too, just to oblige them, to take this small *secrétaire*, although it is not a sort of thing I ever deal in."

"I will buy it of you, Madame Bouvard."

"Will you though? So much the better, sir, for it is else likely to stay with me for some time; I took it, as I say, only to oblige the poor lady. I told her then what I would give for the things, and I expected that she would haggle a bit and ask me something more, I did. Then it was that I saw she was not one of the common; she was in downright misery, she was, and no mistake about it, I am sure! I says to her, 'It's worth so much.' She answers me, and says, 'Very well; let us go back to your shop, and you can pay me there, for we shall not return here again to this house.' Then she says to her daughter, who was sitting on the trunk a-crying, 'Claire, take this bundle.' I remember her name, and I'm sure she called her Claire. Then the young lady got up, but, as she was crossing the room, as she came to the little *secrétaire* she went down on her knees before it, and, dear heart! how the poor thing did sob! 'Courage, my dear child; remember some one sees you,' said her mother to her, in a low voice, but yet I heard her. You

may tell, sir, they were poor, but very proud notwithstanding. When the lady gave me the key of the little *secrétaire*, I saw a tear in her red eyes, and it seemed as if her very heart bled at parting with this old piece of furniture; but she tried to keep up her courage, and not seem downcast before strangers. Then she told the porter that I should come and take away all that the landlord did not keep, and after that we came back here. The young lady gave her arm to her mother, and carried in her hand the small bundle, which contained all they possessed in the world. I handed them their three hundred and fifteen francs, and then I never saw them again."

"But their name?"

"I don't know; the lady sold me the things in the presence of the porter, and so I had no occasion to ask her name, for what she sold belonged to her."

"But their new address?"

"I don't know that either."

"No doubt they know at their old lodging?"

"No, sir; for, when I went back to get the things, the porter told me, speaking of the mother and daughter, 'that they were very quiet people, very respectable, and very unfortunate, — I hope no misfortune has happened to them! They appeared to be very calm and composed, but I am sure they were quite in despair.' 'And where are they gone now to lodge?' I asked. '*Ma foi*, I don't know!' was the answer; 'they left without telling me, and I am sure they will not return here.'"

The hopes which Rodolph had entertained for a moment vanished; how could he go to work to discover these two unfortunate females, when all the trace he had of them was that the young daughter's name was Claire, and the fragment of a letter, of which we have already made mention, and at the bottom of which were these words:

"To write to Madame de Lucenay, for M. de Saint-Remy?"

The only, and very remote chance of discovering the traces of these unfortunates was through Madame de Lucenay, who, fortunately, was on intimate terms with Madame d'Harville.

"Here, ma'am, be so good as to take your money," said Rodolph to the shopkeeper, handing her a note for five hundred francs.

"I will give you the change, sir. What is your address?"

"Rue du Temple, No. 17."

"Rue du Temple, No. 17; oh, very well, very well, I know it."

"Have you ever been to that house?"

"Often. First I bought the furniture of a woman there, who lent money on wages; it is not a very creditable business, to be sure, but that's no affair of mine,—she sells, I buy, and so that's settled. Another time, not six weeks ago, I went there again for the furniture of a young man, who lived on the fourth floor, and was moving away."

"M. François Germain, perhaps?" said Rodolph.

"Just so. Did you know him?"

"Very well; and, unfortunately, he has not left his present address in the Rue du Temple, so I do not know where to find him. But where shall we find a cart to take the goods?"

"As it is not far, a large truck will do, and old Jérome is close by, my regular commissionaire. If you wish to know the address of M. François Germain, I can help you."

"What? Do you know where he lives?"

"Not exactly, but I know where you may be sure to meet with him."

"Where?"

"At the notary's where he works."

"At a notary's?"

"Yes, who lives in the Rue du Sentier."

"M. Jacques Ferrand?" exclaimed Rodolph.

"Yes; and a very worthy man he is. There is a crucifix and some holy boxwood in his study; it looks just as if one was in a sacristy."

"But how did you know that M. Germain worked at this notary's?"

"Why, this way: this young man came to me to ask me to buy his little lot of furniture all of a lump. So that time, too, though rather out of my line, I bought all his kit, and brought it here, because he seemed a nice young fellow, and I had a pleasure in obliging him. Well, I bought him right clean out, and I paid him well; he was, no doubt, very well satisfied, for, a fortnight afterwards, he came again, to buy some bed furniture from me. A commissionaire, with a truck, went with him, everything was packed: well, but, at the moment he was going to pay me, lo and behold! he had forgotten his purse; but he looked so like an honest man that I said to him, 'Take the things with you, — never mind, I shall be passing your way, and will call for the money.' 'Very good,' says he; 'but I am never at home, so call to-morrow in the Rue du Sentier, at M. Jacques Ferrand's, the notary, where I am employed, and I will pay you.' I went next day, and he paid me; only, what was very odd to me was that he sold his things, and then, a fortnight afterwards, he buys others."

Rodolph thought that he was able to account for this singular fact. Germain was desirous of destroying every trace from the wretches who were pursuing him: fearing, no doubt, that his removal might put them on the scent of his fresh abode, he had preferred, in order to avoid this danger, selling his goods, and afterwards buying others.

The prince was overjoyed to think of the happiness in store for Madame Georges, who would thus, at length, see again that son so long and vainly sought.

Rigolette now returned, with a joyful eye and smiling lips.

"Well, did not I tell you so?" she exclaimed. "I am not deceived: we shall have spent six hundred and forty francs all together, and the Morels will be set up like princes. Here come the shopkeepers; are they not loaded? Nothing will now be wanting for the family; they will have everything requisite, even to a gridiron, two newly tinned saucepans, and a coffee-pot. I said to myself, since they are to have things done so grandly, let them be grand; and, with all that, I shall not have lost more than three hours. But come, neighbour, pay as quickly as you can, and let us be gone. It will soon be noon, and my needle must go at a famous rate to make up for this morning."

Rodolph paid, and quitted the Temple with Rigolette.

At the moment when the grisette and her companion were entering the passage, they were almost knocked over by Madame Pipelet, who was running out, frightened, troubled, and aghast.

"Mercy on us!" said Rigolette, "what ails you, Madame Pipelet? Where are you running to in that manner?"

"Is it you, Mlle. Rigolette?" exclaimed Anastasie; "it is Providence that sends you; help me to save the life of Alfred."

"What do you mean?"

"The darling old duck has fainted. Have mercy on us! Run for me, and get me two sous' worth of absinthe at the dram-shop, — the strongest, mind; it is his remedy when he is indisposed in the pylorus, — that generally sets him up again. Be kind, and do not refuse me, I can then return to Alfred; I am all over in such a fluster."

Rigolette let go Rodolph's arm, and ran quickly to the dram-shop.

"But what has happened, Madame Pipelet?" inquired Rodolph, following the porteress into the lodge.

"How can I tell, my worthy sir? I had gone out to

the mayor's, to church, and the cook-shop, to save Alfred so much trotting about; I returned, and what should I see but the dear old cosset with his legs and arms all in the air! There, M. Rodolph," said Anastasie, opening the door of her dog-hole, "say if that is not enough to break one's heart!"

Lamentable spectacle! With his bell-crowned hat still on his head, even further on than usual, for the ambiguous castor, pushed down, no doubt, by violence, to judge by a transverse gap, covered M. Pipelet's eyes, who was on his back on the ground at the foot of his bed. The fainting was over, and Alfred was beginning to make some slight gesticulations with his hands, as if he sought to repulse somebody or something, and then he tried to push off this troublesome visor, with which he had been bonneted.

"He kicks, — that's a beautiful symptom! He comes to!" exclaimed the porteress, who, stooping down, bawled in his ears, "What's the matter with my Alfred? It's his 'Stasie who is with him. How goes it now? There's some absinthe coming, that will set you up." Then, assuming a falsetto voice of much endearment, she added: "What, did they abuse and assassinate him, — the dear old darling, the delight of his 'Stasie, eh?"

Alfred heaved an immense sigh, and, with a mighty groan, uttered the fatal word:

"Cabrion!"

And his tremulous hands again seemed desirous of repulsing the fearful vision.

"Cabrion! What, that cussed painter again?" exclaimed Madame Pipelet. "Alfred dreamed of him all night long, so that he kicked me almost to death. This monster is his nightmare; not only does he poison his days, but he poisons his nights also, — he pursues him in his very sleep; yes, sir, as though Alfred was a malefactor, and this Cabrion, whom may Heaven confound! was his unceasing remorse."

Rodolph smiled, discreetly detecting some new freak of Rigolette's former neighbour.

"Alfred! answer me; don't remain mute, you frighten me," said Madame Pipelet; "let's try and get you up. Why, lovey, do you keep thinking of that vagabond fellow? You know that, when you think of that fellow, it has the same effect on you that cabbage has, — it fills up your pylorus and stifles you."

"Cabrion!" repeated M. Pipelet, pushing up, with an effort, the hat which had fallen so low over his eyes, which he rolled around him with an affrighted air.

Rigolette entered, carrying a small bottle of absinthe.

"Thankee, ma'amselle, you are so kind!" said the old body; and then she added, "Come, deary, suck this down, that will make you all right."

And Anastasie, presenting the phial quickly to M. Pipelet's lips, contrived to make him swallow the absinthe. In vain did Alfred struggle vigorously. His wife, taking advantage of the victim's weakness, held up his head firmly with one hand, whilst with the other she introduced the neck of the little bottle between his teeth, and compelled him to swallow the absinthe, after which she exclaimed, triumphantly:

"Ther-r-r-r-e, now-w-w! you're on your pins again, my ducky!"

And Alfred, having wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, opened his eyes, rose, and inquired, in accents of alarm:

"Have you seen him?"

"Who?"

"Is he gone?"

"Who, Alfred?"

"*Cabrion!*"

"Has he dared — " asked the porteress.

M. Pipelet, as mute as the statue of the commandant, like that redoubtable spectre, bowed his head twice with an affirmative air.

"What! has M. Cabrion been here?" inquired Rigolette, repressing a violent desire to laugh.

"What! has the monster been unchained on Alfred?" said Madame Pipelet. "Oh, if I had been there with my broom, he should have swallowed it, handle and all! But tell us, Alfred, all about this horrid affair."

M. Pipelet made signs with his hand that he was about to speak, and they listened to the man with the bell-crowned hat in religious silence, whilst he expressed himself in these terms, and in a voice of deep emotion:

"My wife had left me, to save me the trouble of going out, according to the request of monsieur," bowing to Rodolph, "to the mayor's, to church, and the cook-shop."

"The dear old darling had had the nightmare all night, and I wished to save him the journey," said Anastasie.

"This nightmare was sent me as a warning from on high," responded the porter, religiously. "I had dreamed of Cabrion, and I was to suffer from Cabrion. Here was I sitting quietly in front of my table, reflecting on an alteration which I wished to make in the upper leather of this boot confided to my hands, when I heard a noise, a rustling, at the window of my lodge, — was it a presentiment, a warning from on high? My heart beat, I lifted up my head, and, through the pane of glass, I saw — I saw —"

"Cabrion!" exclaimed Anastasie, clasping her hands.

"Cabrion!" replied M. Pipelet, gloomily. "His hideous face was there, pressed close against the window, and he was looking at me with eyes like a cat's — what do I say? — a tiger's! just as in my dream. I tried to speak, but my tongue clave to my mouth; I tried to rise, I was nailed to my seat. My boot fell from my hands, and, as in all the critical and important events of my life, I remained perfectly motionless. Then the key turned in the lock, the door opened, — Cabrion entered!"

"He entered? Owdacious monster!" replied Madame

Pipelet, as much astonished as her spouse at such audacity.

"He entered slowly," resumed Alfred, "stopped a moment at the threshold, as if to fascinate me with his look, atrocious as it was, then he advanced towards me, pausing at each step, and piercing me through with his eye, but not uttering a word, — straight, mute, and threatening as a phantom!"

"I declare, my very heart aches to hear him," said Anastasie.

"I remained still more motionless, and glued to my chair; Cabrion still advanced slowly towards me, fixing his eye as the serpent glares at the bird; he so frightened me that, in spite of myself, I kept my eye on him; he came close to me, and then I could no longer endure his revolting aspect, it was too much, and I could not. I shut my eyes, and then I felt that he dared to place his hands upon my hat, which he took by the crown and lifted gently off my head, leaving it bare. I began to be seized with vertigo, my breathing was suspended, there was a singing in my ears, and I was completely fastened to my seat, and I closed my eyes still closer and closer. Then Cabrion stooped, took my head between his hands, which were as cold as death, and on my forehead, covered with an icy damp, he deposited a brazen kiss, indecent wretch!"

Anastasie lifted her hands towards heaven.

"My enemy, the most deadly, imprinted a kiss on my forehead; such a monstrosity overcame and paralysed me. Cabrion profited by my stupor to place my hat on my head, and then, with a blow of his fist, drove it down over my eyes, as you saw. This last outrage destroyed me; the measure was full, all about me was turning around, and I fainted at the moment when I saw him, from under the rim of my hat, leave the lodge as quietly and slowly as he had entered."

Then, as if the recital had exhausted all his strength,

M. Pipelet fell back in his chair, raising his hands to heaven in a manner of mute imprecation. Rigolette went out quickly; she could not restrain herself any longer; her desire to laugh almost stifled her. Rodolph had the greatest difficulty to keep his countenance.

Suddenly there was a confused murmur, such as announces the arrival of a mob, heard from the street, and a great noise came from the door at the top of the entrance, and then butts of grounded muskets were heard on the steps of the door.

CHAPTER II.

THE ARREST.

"Good gracious! M. Rodolph," exclaimed Rigolette, running in, pale and trembling, "a commissary of police and the guard have come here."

"Divine justice watches over me," said M. Pipelet, in a transport of pious gratitude. "They have come to arrest Cabrion; unfortunately it is too late."

A commissary of police, wearing his tricoloured scarf around his waist underneath his black coat, entered the lodge. His countenance was impressive, magisterial, and serious.

"M. le Commissaire is too late; the malefactor has escaped," said M. Pipelet, in a sorrowful voice; "but I will give you his description,—villainous smile, impudent look, insulting—"

"Of whom do you speak?" inquired the magistrate.

"Of Cabrion, M. le Commissaire; but, perhaps, if you make all haste, it is not yet too late to catch him," added M. Pipelet.

"I know nothing about any Cabrion," said the magistrate, impatiently. "Does one Jérome Morel, a working lapidary, live in this house?"

"Yes, mon commissaire," said Madame Pipelet, putting herself into a military attitude.

"Conduct me to his apartment."

"Morel, the lapidary!" said the porteress, excessively surprised; "why, he is the mildest lambkin in the world. He is incapable of—"

"Does Jérome Morel live here or not?"

"He lives here, sir, with his family, in one of the attics."

"Lead me to his attic."

Then, addressing himself to a man who accompanied him, the magistrate said:

"Let two of the municipal guard wait below, and not leave the entrance. Send Justing for a hackney-coach."

The man left the lodge to put these orders in execution.

"Now," continued the magistrate, addressing himself to M. Pipelet, "lead me to Morel."

"If it is all the same to you, mon commissaire, I will do that for Alfred; he is indisposed from Cabrion's behaviour, which, just as the cabbage does, troubles his pylorus."

"You or your husband, it is no matter which. Go forward."

And, preceded by Madame Pipelet, he ascended the staircase, but soon stopped when he saw Rodolph and Rigolette following him.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" he inquired.

"They are two lodgers in the fourth story," said Madame Pipelet.

"I beg your pardon, sir, I did not know that you belonged to the house," said he to Rodolph.

The latter, auguring well from the polite behaviour of the magistrate, said to him:

"You are going to see a family in a state of deep misery, sir. I do not know what fresh stroke of ill fortune threatens this unhappy artisan, but he has been cruelly tried last night, — one of his daughters, worn down by illness, is dead before his eyes, — dead from cold and misery."

"Is it possible?"

"It is, indeed, the fact, mon commissaire," said Madame Pipelet. "But for this gentleman who speaks

to you, and who is a king of lodgers, for he has saved poor Morel from prison by his generosity, the whole family of the lapidary must have died of hunger."

The commissary looked at Rodolph with equal surprise and interest.

"Nothing is more easily explained, sir," said Rodolph. "A person who is very charitable, learning that Morel, whose honour and honesty I will guarantee to you, was in a most deplorable and unmerited state of distress, authorised me to pay a bill of exchange for which the bailiffs were about to drag off to prison this poor workman, the sole support of his numerous family."

The magistrate, in his turn, struck by the noble physiognomy of Rodolph, as well as the dignity of his manners, replied:

"I have no doubt of Morel's probity. I only regret I have to fulfil a painful duty in your presence, sir, who have so deeply interested yourself in this family."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"From the services you have rendered to the Morels, and your language, I see, sir, that you are a worthy person. Having, besides, no reason for concealing the object of the warrant which I have to execute, I will confess to you that I am about to apprehend Louise Morel, the lapidary's daughter."

The recollection of the rouleau of gold, offered to the bailiffs by the young girl, occurred to Rodolph.

"Of what is she then accused?"

"She lies under a charge of child-murder."

"She! she! Oh, her poor father!"

"From what you have told me, sir, I imagine that, under the miserable circumstances in which this artisan is, this fresh blow will be terrible for him. Unfortunately, I must carry out the full instructions with which I am charged."

"But it is at present only an accusation?" asked Rodolph. "Proofs, no doubt, are still wanting?"

"I cannot tell you more on that point. Justice has been informed of this crime, or rather the presumptive crime, by the statement of an individual most respectable in every particular, Louise Morel's master."

"Jacques Ferrand, the notary?" said Rodolph, with indignation.

"Yes, sir —"

"M. Jacques Ferrand is a wretch, sir!"

"I am pained to see that you do not know the person of whom you speak, sir. M. Jacques Ferrand is one of the most honourable men in the world; his rectitude is universally recognised."

"I repeat to you, sir, that this notary is a wretch. It was he who sought to send Morel to prison because his daughter repulsed his libidinous proposals. If Louise is only accused on the denunciation of such a man, you must own, sir, that the charge deserves but very little credit."

"It is not my affair, sir, and I am very glad of it, to discuss the depositions of M. Ferrand," said the magistrate, coldly. "Justice is informed in this matter, and it is for a court of law to decide. As for me, I have a warrant to apprehend Louise Morel, and that warrant I must put into execution."

"You are quite right, sir, and I regret that an impulse of feeling, however just, should have made me forget for a moment that this was neither the time nor the place for such a discussion. One word only: the corpse of the child which Morel has lost is still in the attic, and I have offered my apartments to the family to spare them the sad spectacle of the dead body. You will, therefore, find the lapidary, and possibly his daughter, in my rooms. I entreat you, sir, in the name of humanity, do not apprehend Louise abruptly in the midst of the unhappy family only a short time since snatched from their state of utter wretchedness. Morel has had so many shocks during this night that it is really to be feared his reason may

sink under it; already his wife is dangerously ill, and such a blow would kill him."

"Sir, I have always executed my orders with every possible consideration, and I shall act similarly now."

"Will you allow me, sir, to ask you one favour? It is this: the young female who is following us occupies an apartment close to mine, which, I have no doubt, she would place at your disposal. You could, in the first instance, send for Louise, and, if necessary, for Morel afterwards, that his daughter may take leave of him. You will thus save a poor sick and infirm mother from a very distressing scene."

"Most willingly, sir, if it can be so arranged."

The conversation we have just described was carried on in an undertone, whilst Rigolette and Madame Pipelet kept away discreetly a few steps' distance from the commissary and Rodolph. The latter then went to the grisette, whom the presence of the commissary had greatly affrighted, and said to her:

"My good little neighbour, I want another service from you, — I want you to leave your room at my disposal for the next hour."

"As long as you please, M. Rodolph. You have the key. But, oh, say what is the matter?"

"I will tell you all by and by. But I want something more; you must return to the Temple, and tell them not to bring our purchases here for the next hour."

"To be sure I will, M. Rodolph; but has any fresh misfortune befallen the Morels?"

"Alas! yes, something very sad indeed, which you will learn but too soon."

"Well, then, neighbour, I will run to the Temple. Alas, alas! I was thinking that, thanks to your kindness, these poor people had been quite relieved from their trouble!" said the grisette, who then descended the staircase very quickly.

Rodolph had been very desirous of sparing Rigolette the distressing scene of Louise Morel's arrest.

"Mon commissaire," said Madame Pipelet, "since my king of lodgers will direct you, I may return to my Alfred. I am uneasy about him, for when I left him he had hardly recovered from his indisposition which Cabrion had caused."

"Go, go," said the magistrate, who was thus left alone with Rodolph.

They both ascended to the landing-place on the fourth story, at the door of the chamber in which the lapidary and his family had been temporarily established.

Suddenly the door opened. Louise, pale and in tears, came out quickly.

"Adieu, adieu, father!" she exclaimed. "I will come back again, but I must go now."

"Louise, my child, listen to me a moment," said Morel, following his daughter, and endeavouring to detain her.

At the sight of Rodolph and the magistrate, Louise and the lapidary remained motionless.

"Ah, sir, you, our kind benefactor!" said the artisan, recognising Rodolph, "assist me in preventing Louise from leaving us. I do not know what is the matter with her, but she quite frightens me, she is so determined to go. Now there is no occasion for her to return to her master, is there, sir? Did you not say to me, 'Louise shall not again leave you, and that will recompense you for much that you have suffered?' Ah! at that kind promise, I confess that for a moment I had forgot the death of my poor little Adèle; but I must not again be separated from thee, Louise, oh, never, never!"

Rodolph was wounded to the heart, and was unable to utter a word in reply.

The commissary said sternly to Louise:

"Is your name Louise Morel?"

"Yes, sir," replied the young girl, quite overcome.

"You are Jérome Morel, her father?" added the magistrate, addressing the lapidary.

Rodolph had opened the door of Rigolette's apartment.

"Yes, sir; but—"

"Go in there with your daughter."

And the magistrate pointed to Rigolette's chamber, into which Rodolph had already entered.

Reassured by his preserver, the lapidary and Louise, astonished and uneasy, did as the commissary desired them.

The commissary shut the door, and said with much feeling to Morel:

"I know that you are honest and unfortunate, and it is, therefore, with regret that I tell you that I am here in the name of the law to apprehend your daughter."

"All is discovered,—I am lost!" cried Louise, in agony, and throwing herself into her father's arms.

"What do you say? What do you say?" inquired Morel, stupefied. "You are mad! What do you mean by lost? Apprehend you! Why apprehend you? Who has come to apprehend you?"

"I, and in the name of the law;" and the commissary showed his scarf.

"Oh, wretched, wretched girl!" exclaimed Louise, falling on her knees.

"What! in the name of the law?" said the artisan, whose reason, severely shaken by this fresh blow, began to totter. "Why apprehend my daughter in the name of the law? I will answer for Louise, I will,—this my child, my good child, ain't you, Louise? What! apprehend you, when our good angel has restored you to us to console us for the death of our poor, dear little Adèle? Come, come, this can't be. And then, to speak respectfully, M. le Commissaire, they apprehend none but the bad, you know; and my Louise is not bad. So you see, my dear, the good gentleman is mistaken. My name is Morel, but there are other Morels; you are Louise, but

there are other Louises; so you see, M. le Commissaire, there is a mistake, certainly some mistake!"

"Unhappily there is no mistake. Louise Morel, take leave of your father!"

"What! are you going to take my daughter away?" exclaimed the workman, furious with grief, and advancing towards the magistrate with a menacing air.

Rodolph seized the lapidary by the arm, and said to him:

"Be calm, and hope for the best; your daughter will be restored to you; her innocence must be proved; she cannot be guilty."

"Guilty of what? She is not guilty of anything. I will put my hand in the fire if —" Then, remembering the gold which Louise had brought to pay the bill with, Morel cried, "But the money — that money you had this morning, Louise!" And he gave his daughter a terrible look.

Louise understood it.

"I rob!" she exclaimed; and her cheeks suffused with generous indignation, her tone and gesture, reassured her father.

"I knew it well enough!" he exclaimed. "You see, M. le Commissaire, she denies it; and I swear to you, that she never told me a lie in her life; and everybody that knows her will say the same thing as I do. She lie! Oh, no, she is too proud to do that! And, then, the bill has been paid by our benefactor. The gold she does not wish to keep, but will return it to the person who lent it to her, desiring him not to tell any one; won't you, Louise?"

"Your daughter is not accused of theft," said the magistrate.

"Well, then, what is the charge against her? I, her father, swear to you that she is innocent of whatever crime they may accuse her of, and I never told a lie in my life either."

"Why should you know what she is charged with?" said Rodolph, moved by his distress. "Louise's innocence will be proved; the person who takes so great an interest in you will protect your daughter. Come, come! Courage, courage! This time Providence will not forsake you. Embrace your daughter, and you will soon see her again."

"M. le Commissaire," cried Morel, not attending to Rodolph, "you are going to deprive a father of his daughter without even naming the crime of which she is accused! Let me know all! Louise, why don't you speak?"

"Your daughter is accused of child-murder," said the magistrate.

"I — I — I — child-mur — I don't — you —"

And Morel, aghast, stammered incoherently.

"Your daughter is accused of having killed her child," said the commissary, deeply touched at this scene; "but it is not yet proved that she has committed this crime."

"Oh, no, I have not, sir! I have not!" exclaimed Louise, energetically, and rising; "I swear to you that it was dead. It never breathed, — it was cold. I lost my senses, — this is my crime. But kill my child! Oh, never, never!"

"Your child, abandoned girl!" cried Morel, raising his hands towards Louise, as if he would annihilate her by this gesture and imprecation.

"Pardon, father, pardon!" she exclaimed.

After a moment's fearful silence, Morel resumed, with a calm that was even more frightful:

"M. le Commissaire, take away that creature; she is not my child!"

The lapidary turned to leave the room; but Louise threw herself at his knees, around which she clung with both arms; and, with her head thrown back, distracted and supplicating, she exclaimed:

"Father, hear me! Only hear me!"

"M. le Commissaire, away with her, I beseech you! I leave her to you," said the lapidary, struggling to free himself from Louise's embrace.

"Listen to her," said Rodolph, holding him; "do not be so pitiless."

"To her! To her!" repeated Morel, lifting his two hands to his forehead, "to a dishonoured wretch! A wanton! Oh, a wanton!"

"But, if she were dishonoured through her efforts to save you?" said Rodolph to him in a low voice.

These words made a sudden and painful impression on Morel, and he cast his eyes on his weeping child still on her knees before him; then, with a searching look, impossible to describe, he cried in a hollow voice, clenching his teeth with rage:

"The notary?"

An answer came to Louise's lips. She was about to speak, but paused, — no doubt a reflection, — and, bending down her head, remained silent.

"No, no; he sought to imprison me this morning!" continued Morel, with a violent burst. "Can it be he? Ah, so much the better, so much the better! She has not even an excuse for her crime; she never thought of me in her dishonour, and I may curse her without remorse."

"No, no; do not curse me, my father! I will tell you all, — to you alone, and you will see — you will see whether or not I deserve your forgiveness."

"For pity's sake, hear her!" said Rodolph to him.

"What will she tell me, — her infamy? That will soon be public, and I can wait till then."

"Sir," said Louise, addressing the magistrate, "for pity's sake, leave me alone with my father, that I may say a few words to him before I leave him, perhaps for ever; and before you, also, our benefactor, I will speak; but only before you and my father."

"Be it so," said the magistrate.

"Will you be pitiless, and refuse this last consolation to your child?" asked Rodolph of Morel. "If you think you owe me any gratitude for the kindness which I have been enabled to show you, consent to your daughter's entreaties."

After a moment's sad and angry silence, Morel replied:

"I will."

"But where shall we go!" inquired Rodolph; "your family are in the other room."

"Where shall we go," exclaimed the lapidary, with a bitter irony, "where shall we go? Up above, — up above, into the garret, by the side of the body of my dead daughter; that spot will well suit a confession, will it not? Come along, come, and we will see if Louise will dare to tell a lie in the presence of her sister's corpse. Come! Come along!"

And Morel went out hastily with a wild air, and turning his face from Louise.

"Sir," said the commissary to Rodolph, in an undertone, "I beg you for this poor man's sake not to protract this conversation. You were right when you said his reason was touched; just now his look was that of a madman."

"Alas, sir, I am equally fearful with yourself of some fresh and terrible disaster! I will abridge as much as I can this most painful farewell."

And Rodolph rejoined the lapidary and his daughter.

However strange and painful Morel's determination might appear, it was really the only thing that, under the circumstances, could be done. The magistrate consented to await the issue of this conversation in Rigolette's chamber; the Morel family were occupying Rodolph's apartment, and there was only the garret at liberty; and it was into this horrid retreat that Louise, her father, and Rodolph betook themselves. Sad and affecting sight!

In the middle of the attic which we have already described, there lay, stretched on the idiot's mattress, the body of the little girl who had died in the morning, now covered by a ragged cloth. The unusual and clear light, reflected through the narrow skylight, threw the figures of the three actors in this scene into bold relief. Rodolph, standing up, was leaning with his back against the wall, deeply moved. Morel, seated at the edge of his working-bench, with his head bent, his hands hanging listless by his sides, whilst his gaze, fixed and fierce, rested on, and did not quit, the mattress on which the remains of his poor little Adèle were deposited. At this spectacle, the anger and indignation of the lapidary subsided, and were changed to inexpressible bitterness; his energy left him, and he was utterly prostrated beneath this fresh blow. Louise, who was ghastly pale, felt her strength forsake her. The revelation she was about to make terrified her. Still she ventured, tremblingly, to take her father's hand, — that miserable and shrivelled hand, withered and wasted by excess of toil. The lapidary did not withdraw it, and then his daughter, sobbing as if her heart would burst, covered it with kisses, and felt it slightly pressed against her lips. Morel's wrath had ended, and then his tears, long repressed, flowed freely and bitterly.

"Oh, father, if you only knew!" exclaimed Louise; "if you only knew how much I am to be pitied!"

"Oh, Louise, this, this will be the heaviest bitter in my cup for the rest of my life, — all my life long," replied the lapidary, weeping terribly. "You, you in prison, — in the same bench with criminals; you so proud when you had a right to be proud! No," he resumed in a fresh burst of grief and despair, "no; I would rather have seen you in your shroud beside your poor little sister!"

"And I, I would sooner be there!" replied Louise.

"Be silent, unhappy girl, you pain me. I was wrong

to say so; I have been too harsh. Come, speak; but in the name of Heaven, do not lie. However frightful the truth may be, yet tell it me all; let me learn it from your lips, and it will be less cruel. Speak, for, alas! our moments are counted, they are waiting for you down below. Ah, just Heaven, what a sad, sad parting!"

"My father, I will tell you all, — everything," replied Louise, taking courage; "but promise me — and our kind benefactor must promise me also — not to repeat this to any person, — to any person. If he knew that I had told! — oh," and she shuddered as she spoke, "you would be destroyed, destroyed as I am; for you know not the power and ferocity of this man."

"What man?"

"My master!"

"The notary?"

"Yes," said Louise in a whisper, and looking around her as if she feared to be overheard.

"Take courage," said Rodolph; "no matter how cruel and powerful this man may be, we will defeat him! Besides, if I reveal what you are about to tell us, it would only be in the interest of yourself or your father."

"And me too, Louise, if I speak, it would be in endeavouring to save you. But what has this villain done?"

"This is not all," said Louise, after a moment's reflection; "in this recital there will be a person implicated who has rendered me a great service, who has shown the utmost kindness to my father and family; this person was in the employ of M. Ferrand when I entered his service, and he made me take an oath not to disclose his name."

Rodolph, believing that she referred to Germain, said to Louise:

"If you mean François Germain, make your mind tranquil, his secret shall be kept by your father and myself."

Louise looked at Rodolph with surprise.

"Do you know him?" said she.

"What! was the good, excellent young man, who lived here for three months, employed at the notary's when you went to his service?" said Morel. "The first time you met him here, you appeared as if you had never seen him before."

"It was agreed between us, father; he had serious reasons why he did not wish it known that he was working at M. errand's. It was I who told him of the room to let on the fourth story here, knowing that he would be a good neighbour for you."

"But," inquired Rodolph, "who, then, placed your daughter at the notary's?"

"During the illness of my wife, I said to Madame Burette — the woman who advanced money on pledges, who lived in this house — that Louise wished to get into service in order to assist us. Madame Burette knew the notary's housekeeper, and gave me a letter to her, in which she recommended Louise as a very good girl. Cursed letter! it was the cause of all our misfortune. This was the way, sir, that my daughter got into the notary's service."

"Although I know some of the causes which excited M. Ferrand's hatred against your father," said Rodolph to Louise, "I beg you to tell me as shortly as possible what passed between you and the notary after your entering into his service; it may, perhaps, be useful for your defence."

"When I first went into M. Ferrand's house," said Louise, "I had nothing to complain of with respect to him. I had a great deal to do, and the housekeeper often scolded me, and the house was very dull; but I endured everything very patiently. Service is service, and, perhaps, elsewhere I should have other disagreeables. M. Ferrand was a very stern-looking person; he went to mass, and frequently had priests in his house.

I did not at all distrust him ; for at first he hardly ever looked at me, spoke short and cross, especially when there were any strangers. Except the porter who lived at the entrance, in the same part of the house as the office is in, I was the only servant, with Madame Séraphin, the housekeeper. The pavilion that we occupied was isolated between the court and the garden. My bedroom was high up. I was often afraid, being, as I was, always alone, either in the kitchen, which is underground, or in my bedroom. One day I had worked very late mending some things that were required in a hurry, and then I was going to bed, when I heard footsteps moving quietly in the little passage at the end of which my room was situated; some one stopped at my door. At first I supposed it was the housekeeper ; but, as no one entered, I began to be alarmed. I dared not move, but I listened; however, I heard no one; yet I was sure that there was some one behind my door. I asked twice who was there, but no one answered ; I then pushed my chest of drawers against the door, which had neither lock nor bolt. I still listened, but nothing stirred; so at the end of half an hour, which seemed very long to me, I threw myself on my bed, and the night passed quietly. The next morning I asked the housekeeper's leave to have a bolt put on my door, which had no fastening, telling her of my fright on the previous night, and she told me I had been dreaming, and that, if I wanted a bolt, I must ask M. Ferrand for it. When I asked him, he shrugged up his shoulders, and said I was crazy; so I did not dare say any more about it. Some time after this, the misfortune about the diamond happened. My father in his despair did not know what to do. I told Madame Séraphin of his distress, and she replied; 'Monsieur is so charitable, perhaps he will do something for your father.' The same afternoon, when I was waiting at table, M. Ferrand said to me, suddenly, 'Your father is in want of thir-

teen hundred francs; go and tell him to come to my office this evening, and he shall have the money.' At this mark of kindness I burst into tears, and did not know how to thank him, when he said, with his usual bluntness, 'Very good, very good; oh, what I do is nothing!' The same evening, after my work, I came to my father to tell him the good news; the next day—"

"I had the thirteen hundred francs, giving him my acceptance in blank at three months' date," said Morel. "I did like Louise, and wept with gratitude, called this man my benefactor. Oh, what a wretch must he be thus to destroy the gratitude and veneration I entertained for him!"

"This precaution of making you give him a blank acceptance, at a date falling due so soon that you could not meet it, must have raised your suspicion?" said Rodolph.

"No, sir, I only thought the notary took it for security, that was all; besides, he told me that I need not think about repaying this sum in less than two years; but that, every three months, the bill should be renewed for the sake of greater regularity. It was, however, duly presented here on the day it became due, but, as you may suppose, was not paid. The usual course of law was followed up, and judgment was obtained against me in the name of a third party. All this I was desired not to feel any uneasiness respecting, as it had been caused by an error on the part of the officer in whose hands the bill had been placed."

"His motive is very evident," said Rodolph; "he wished to have you entirely in his power."

"Alas, sir, it was from the very day in which he obtained judgment that he commenced! But, go on, Louise, go on. I scarcely know where I am. My head seems giddy and bewildered, and at times my memory entirely fails me. I fear my senses are leaving me, and that I shall become mad. Oh, this is too much—too hard to bear!"

Rodolph having succeeded in tranquillising the lapidary, Louise thus proceeded:

"With a view to prove my gratitude to M. Ferrand for all his kindness towards my family, I redoubled my endeavours to serve him well and faithfully. From that time the housekeeper appeared to take an utter aversion to me, and to embrace every opportunity of rendering me uncomfortable, continually exposing me to anger by withholding from me the various orders given by M. Ferrand. All this made me extremely miserable, and I would gladly have sought another place; but the knowledge of my father's pecuniary obligation to my master prevented my following my inclinations.

"The money had now been lent about three months, and, though M. Ferrand still continued harsh and unkind to me in the presence of Madame Séraphin, he began casting looks of a peculiar and embarrassing description at me whenever he could do so unobserved, and would smile and seem amused when he perceived the confusion it occasioned me."

"Take notice, I beg, sir, that it was at this very time the necessary legal proceedings, for enabling him at any moment to deprive me of my liberty, were going on."

"One day," said Louise, in continuation, "the housekeeper went out directly after dinner, contrary to her usual custom; the clerks, none of whom lived in the house, were dismissed from further duty for the day, and retired to their respective homes; the porter was sent out on a message, leaving M. Ferrand and myself alone in the house. I was doing some needlework Madame Séraphin had given me, and by her orders was sitting in a small antechamber, from whence I could hear if I was wanted. After some time the bell of my master's bedroom rang; I went there immediately, and upon entering found him standing before the fire. As I approached he turned around suddenly and caught me in his arms. Alarm and surprise at first

deprived me of power to move; but, spite of his great strength, I at last struggled so successfully, that I managed to free myself from his grasp, and, running back with all speed to the room I had just quitted, I hastily shut the door, and held it with all my force. Unfortunately, the key was on the other side."

"You hear, sir, — you hear," said Morel to Rodolph, "the manner in which this generous benefactor behaved to the daughter of the man he affected to serve!"

"At the end of a few minutes," continued Louise, "the door yielded to the efforts of M. Ferrand. Fortunately, the lamp by which I had been working was within my reach, and I precipitately extinguished it. The antechamber was at some distance from his bedchamber, and we were, therefore, left in utter darkness. At first he called me by name; but, finding that I did not reply, he exclaimed, in a voice trembling with rage and passion, 'If you try to escape from me, your father shall go to prison for the thirteen hundred francs he owes, and is unable to pay.' I besought him to have pity on me, promised to do all in my power to serve him faithfully, and with gratitude for all his goodness to my family, but declared that no consideration on earth should induce me to disgrace myself or those I belonged to."

"There spoke my Louise," said Morel, "or, rather, as she would have spoken in her days of proud innocence. How, then, if such were your sentiments — But go on, go on."

"I was still concealed by the darkness, which I trusted would preserve me, when I heard the door closed which led from the antechamber, and which my master had contrived to find by groping along the wall. Thus, having me wholly in his power, he returned to his chamber for a light, with which he quickly returned, and then commenced a fresh attack, the particulars of which, my dearest father, I will not

venture to describe; suffice it, that promises, threats, violence, all were tried; but anger, fear, and despair armed me with fresh strength, and, while I continually eluded his grasp, and fled for safety from room to room, his rage at my determined resistance knew no bounds. In his fury he even struck me with such frenzied violence as to leave my features streaming with blood."

"You hear! you hear!" exclaimed the lapidary, raising his clasped hands towards heaven, "and are crimes like this to go unpunished? Shall such a monster escape and not pay a heavy penalty for his wickedness?"

"Trust me," said Rodolph, who seemed profoundly meditating on what he heard, "trust me, this man's time and hour will come. But continue your painful narration, my poor girl, and shrink not from telling us even its blackest details."

"The struggle between us had now gone on so long that my strength began to fail me. I was conscious of my own inability to resist further, when the porter, who had returned home, rang the bell twice, — the usual signal when letters arrived and required to be fetched from his hands. Fearing that, if I did not obey the summons, the porter would bring the letters himself, M. Ferrand said, 'Go; utter but one word, and to-morrow sees your father in prison. If you endeavour to quit this house, the consequences will fall on him; and, as for you, I will take care no one shall take you into their house, for, without exactly affirming it, I will contrive to make every one think you have robbed me. Then, should any person refer to me for your character, I shall speak of you as an idle, unworthy girl whom I could keep no longer.'

"The following day after this scene, spite of the menaces of my master, I ran home to complain to my father of the unkind usage I received, without daring, however, to tell him all. His first desire was for me to

quit the house of M. Ferrand without delay. But, then, a prison would close upon my poor parent; added to which, my small earnings had become indispensably necessary to our family since the illness of my mother, and the bad character promised me by M. Ferrand might possibly have prevented me from finding another service for a very long time."

"Yes," said Morel, with gloomy bitterness, "we were selfish and cowardly enough to allow our poor child to return to that accursed roof. Oh, I spoke truly when I said, 'Want, want, what mean, what degrading acts do you not force us to commit!'"

"Alas, dear father, did you not try by every possible means to procure these thirteen hundred francs? And, that being impossible, there was nothing left but to submit ourselves to our fate."

"Go on, go on; your parents have been your executioners, and we are far more guilty than yourself of all the fearful consequences!" exclaimed the lapidary, concealing his face with his hands.

"When I next saw my master," said Louise, "he had resumed the harsh and severe manner with which he ordinarily treated me. He made not the slightest reference to the scene I have just related, while his housekeeper persisted in her accustomed tormenting and unkind behaviour towards me, giving me scarcely sufficient food to maintain my strength, and even locking the bread up so that I could not help myself to a morsel; she would even carry her cruelty so far as to wilfully spoil and damage the morsels left by herself and M. Ferrand for my repasts, I always taking my meals after my master and the housekeeper, who invariably sat down to table together. My nights were as painful as my days. I durst not indulge in sleep, lest I should be surprised by the entrance of the notary. I had no means of securing my chamber door, and the chest of drawers with which I used to fasten myself in had been taken away, leaving

me only a small table, a chair, and my box. With these articles I barricaded the door as well as I could, and merely lay down in my clothes, ready to start up at the least noise. Some time elapsed, however, without my having any further alarm as regarded M. Ferrand, who seemed to have altogether forgotten me, and seldom bestowed even a look on me. By degrees my fears died away, and I became almost persuaded I had nothing more to dread from the persecutions of my master. One Sunday I had permission to visit my home, and with extreme delight hastened to announce the happy change that had taken place to my parents. Oh, how we all rejoiced to think so! Up to that moment, my dear father, you know all that occurred. What I have still to tell you," murmured Louise, as her voice sunk into an inarticulate whisper, "is so dreadful that I have never dared reveal it."

"I was sure, ah, too sure," cried Morel, with a wildness of manner and rapidity of utterance which startled and alarmed Rodolph, "that you were hiding something from me. Too plainly did I perceive, by your pale and altered countenance, that your mind was burthened with some heavy secret. Many a time have I said so to your mother; but she, poor thing! would not listen to me, and even blamed me for making myself unnecessarily miserable. So you see, that weakly, and selfish to escape from trouble ourselves, we allowed our poor, helpless child to remain under this monster's roof. And to what have we reduced our poor girl? Why, to be classed with the felons and criminals of a prison! See, see what comes of parents sacrificing their children. And, then, too, be it remembered — after all — who knows? True, we are poor — very poor, and may be guilty — yes, yes, quite right, guilty of throwing our daughter into shame and disgrace. But, then, see how wretched and distressed we were! Besides, such as we — " Then, as if suddenly striving to collect his bewildered ideas, Morel struck his

forehead, exclaiming, "Alas! I know not what I say. My brain burns and my senses seem deserting me. A sort of bewilderment seems to come over me as though I were stupefied with drink. Alas, alas! I am going mad!" So saying, the unhappy man buried his face between his hands.

Unwilling that Louise should perceive the extent of his apprehensions as regarded the agitated state of the lapidary, and how much alarm he felt at his wild, incoherent language, Rodolph gravely replied:

"You are unjust, Morel; it was not for herself alone, but for her aged and afflicted parent, her children, and you, that your poor wife dreaded the consequences of Louise's quitting the notary's house. Accuse no one; but let all your just anger, your bitter curses, fall on the head that alone deserves it, — on that hypocritical monster who offered a weak and helpless girl the alternative of infamy or ruin; perhaps destruction; perhaps death to those she most tenderly loved, — on the fiend who could thus abuse the power he held, thus prey upon the tenderest, holiest feelings of a loving daughter, thus shamelessly outrage every moral and religious duty. But patience; as I before remarked, Providence frequently reserves for crimes so black as this a fearful and astounding retribution."

As Rodolph uttered these words, he spoke with a tone so expressive of his own conviction of the certain vengeance of Heaven, that Louise gazed at her preserver with a surprise not unmingled with fear.

"Go on, my poor girl," resumed Rodolph, addressing Louise; "conceal nothing from us: it is more important than you can be aware that you should relate the most minute details of your sad story."

Thus encouraged, Louise proceeded:

"I began, therefore, as I told you, to regain my tranquillity, when one evening both M. Ferrand and his housekeeper went out. They did not dine at home. I

was quite alone in the house. As usual, my allowance of bread, wine, and water was left for me, and every place carefully locked. When I had finished my work, I took the food placed for me, and, having made my meal, I retired to my bedroom, thinking it less dull than remaining down-stairs by myself. I took care to leave a light in the hall for my master, as when he dined out no one ever sat up for him. Once in my chamber, I seated myself and commenced my sewing; but, contrary to my usual custom, I found the greatest difficulty in keeping myself awake. A heavy drowsiness seemed to steal over, and a weight like lead seemed to press on my eyelids. Alas, dear father!" cried Louise, interrupting herself as though frightened at her own recital, "I feel sure you will not credit what I am about to say, you will believe I am uttering falsehoods; and yet, here, over the lifeless body of my poor little sister, I swear to the truth of each word I speak."

"Explain yourself, my good girl," said Rodolph.

"Indeed, sir," answered Louise, "you ask me to do that I have been vainly trying to accomplish during the last seven months. In vain have I racked my brains to endeavour to account for the events of that fatal night. Sometimes I have almost grown distracted while trying to clear up this fearful and mysterious occurrence."

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed the lapidary, suddenly rousing from one of those fits of almost apathetic stupor into which he had occasionally fallen from the very commencement of this narration, "what dreadful thing is she going to tell us?"

"This lethargic feeling," continued Louise, "so completely overpowered me, that, unable any longer to resist it, I at length, contrary to my usual custom, fell asleep upon my chair. This is all I recollect before — before — Oh, forgive me, father, forgive me! indeed, indeed, I am not guilty; yet —"

"I believe you — I believe you; but proceed."

"I know not how long I slept; but when I awoke it was to shame and dishonour, for I found M. Ferrand beside me."

"'Tis false! 'tis false!" screamed the lapidary, in a tone of frenzied violence. "Confess that you yielded to violence or to the dread of seeing me dragged to prison, but do not seek to impose on me by falsehoods such as this."

"Father! father! I call Heaven to witness I am telling you the truth only."

"I tell you 'tis a base falsehood. Why should the notary have wished to throw me in prison, since you had freely yielded to his wishes?"

"Yielded! Oh, no, dear father, I would have died first! So deep was my sleep that it resembled that of death. It may seem to you both extraordinary and impossible, and I assure you that, up to the present hour, I myself have never been able to understand it or account for it —"

"But I can do so at once," said Rodolph, interrupting Louise. "This crime alone was wanting to complete the heavy calendar of that man's offences. Accuse not your daughter, Morel, of seeking to deceive you. Tell me, Louise, when you made your meal, before ascending to your chamber, did you not remark something peculiar in the taste of the wine given you to drink? Try and recollect this circumstance."

After reflecting a short time, Louise replied:

"Yes, I do indeed remember," answered she, "that the wine and water left for me as usual had a somewhat bitter taste; but I did not pay much attention to it, because the housekeeper would frequently, when spitefully inclined, amuse herself with throwing salt or pepper into what I drank."

"But, on the day you were describing, your wine had a bitter taste?"

"It had, sir, but not sufficiently so to prevent my

drinking it; and I attributed it to the wine being turned."

Morel, with fixed eye and haggard look, listened both to the questions of Rodolph and the answers of Louise without appearing to understand to what they tended.

"And before falling asleep on your chair, did not your head seem unusually heavy, and your limbs weary?"

"Oh, yes, sir, I felt a fullness and throbbing in my temples, an icy coldness seemed to fill my veins, and a feeling of unusual discomfort oppressed me."

"Wretch, villainous wretch!" exclaimed Rodolph. "Are you aware, Morel, what this man made your poor child take in her wine?"

The artisan gazed at Rodolph without replying to his question.

"His accomplice, the housekeeper, had mingled in Louise's drink some sort of stupefying drug, most probably opium, by which means both the bodily and mental powers of your unfortunate daughter were completely paralysed for several hours; and when she awoke from this lethargic state it was to find herself dishonoured and disgraced."

"Ah, now," exclaimed Louise, "my misfortune is explained. You see, dear father, I am less guilty than you thought me. Father! dear, dear father! look upon me, bestow one little look of pity and of pardon on your poor Louise!"

But the glance of the lapidary was fixed and vacant; his honest mind could not comprehend the idea of so black, so monstrous a crime as that ascribed to the notary, and he gazed with blank wonder at the words he heard, as though quite unable to affix any meaning to them. And besides, during the latter part of the discourse, his intellect became evidently shaken, his ideas became a shapeless, confused mass of wandering recollections; a mere chaotic mass of griefs and sorrows possessed his brain, and he sank into a state of mental

prostration, which is to intellect what darkness is to the sight, — the formidable symptoms of a weakened brain. After a pause of some length, Morel replied, in a low, hasty tone:

"Yes, yes; it is bad, very, very bad; cannot be worse!" and then relapsed into his former apathy; while Rodolph, watching him with pained attention, perceived that the energy, even of indignation, was becoming exhausted within the mind of the miserable father, in the same manner as excess of grief will frequently dry up the relief of tears. Anxious to put an end as quickly as possible to the present trying scene, Rodolph said to Louise:

"Proceed, my poor child, and let us have the remainder of this tissue of horrors."

"Alas, sir! what you have heard is as nothing to that which follows. When I perceived M. Ferrand by my side I uttered a cry of terror. My first impulse was to rush from the room, but M. Ferrand forcibly detained me; and I still felt so weak, so stupefied with the medicine you speak of as having been mingled in my drink, that I was powerless as an infant. 'Why do you wish to escape from me now?' inquired M. Ferrand, with an air of surprise which filled me with dread. 'What fresh caprice is this? Am I not here by your own free will and consent?' 'Oh, sir!' exclaimed I, 'this is most shameful and unworthy, to take advantage of my sleep to work my ruin; but my father shall know all!' Here my master interrupted me by bursting into loud laughter. 'Upon my word, young lady,' said he, 'you are very amusing. So you are going to say that I availed myself of your being asleep to effect your undoing. But who do you suppose will credit such a falsehood? It is now four in the morning, and since ten o'clock last night I have been here. You must have slept long and soundly not to have discovered my presence sooner. Come, come, no more attempts at shyness, but confess the truth, that

I came hither with your perfect good-will and consent. You must be less capricious or we shall not keep good friends, I fear. Your father is in my power. You have no longer any cause to fly me. Be obedient to my wishes and we shall do very well together; but resist me, and the consequences shall fall heavily on you, and your family likewise.' 'I will tell my dear father of your conduct,' sobbed I; 'he will avenge me, and the laws will punish you.' M. Ferrand looked at me as though at a loss to comprehend me. 'Why, you have lost your senses,' cried he; 'what, in Heaven's name, can you tell your father? That you thought proper to invite me to your bedroom? But, invent any tale you please, you will soon find what sort of a reception it will meet with. Why, your father will not look at you, much more believe you.' 'But you know,' cried I, 'you well know, sir, I gave no permission for your being here. You are well aware you entered my chamber without my knowledge, and are now here against my will.' 'Against your will! And is it possible you have the effrontery to utter such a falsehood, to dare insinuate that I have employed force to gain my ends? Do you wish to be convinced of the folly of such an imputation? Why, by my orders, Germain, my cashier, returned here last night at ten o'clock to complete some very important papers, and until one o'clock this morning he was writing in the chamber directly under yours; would he not then have been sure to have heard the slightest sound, much less the repetition of such a struggle as we had together a little while ago, my saucy little beauty, when you were not quite in as complying a humour as I found you in last evening? Germain must have heard you during the stillness of the night had you but called for assistance. Ask him, when you see him, whether any such sound occurred; he will tell you no, and that he worked on uninterruptedly during the very hours you are accusing me of forcibly entering your bedchamber.'"

"Ah!" cried Rodolph, "the villain had evidently taken every precaution to prevent detection."

"He had, indeed. As for me, sir," continued Louise, "I was so thunderstruck with horror at these assertions of M. Ferrand, that I knew not what to reply. Ignorant of my having taken anything to induce sleep, I felt wholly unable to account for my having slept so unusually heavy and long. Appearances were strongly against me; what would it avail for me to publish the dreadful story? No one would believe me innocent. How, indeed, could I hope or expect they should, when even to myself the events of that fatal night continued an impenetrable mystery?"

Even Rodolph remained speechless with horror at this fearful revelation of the diabolical hypocrisy of M. Ferrand.

"Then," said he, after a pause of some minutes, "you never ventured to inform your father of the infamous treatment you had received?"

"No," answered she, "for I dreaded lest he might suppose I had willingly listened to the persuasions of my master; and I also feared that, in the first burst of his indignation, my poor father would forget that not only his own freedom, but the very existence of his family, depended upon the pleasure of M. Ferrand."

"And probably," continued Rodolph, desirous if possible to save Louise the painful confession, "probably, yielding to constraint, and the dread of endangering the safety of your father and family by a refusal, you continued to be the victim of this monster's brutality?"

Louise spoke not, but her cast-down eyes, and the deep blushes which dyed her pale cheek, answered most painfully in the affirmative.

"And was his conduct afterwards less barbarous and unfeeling than before?"

"Not in the least. And when, by chance, my master had the curé and vicaire of Bonne Nouvelle to dine with

him, the better to avert all suspicion from himself, he would scold me severely in their presence, and even beg M. le Curé to admonish me, assuring him that some day or other I should fall into ruin; that I was a girl of free and bold manners, and that he could not make me keep my distance with the young men in his office; that I was an idle, unworthy person, whom he only kept out of charity and pity for my father, who was an honest man with a large family, whom he had greatly served and obliged. With the exception of that part of the statement which referred to my father, the rest was utterly false. I never, by any chance, saw the clerks belonging to his office, as it was situated in a building entirely detached from the house."

"And, when alone with M. Ferrand, how did he account for his treatment of you before the curé?"

"He assured me he was only jesting. However, the curé believed him, and reprehended me very severely, saying that a person must be vicious indeed to go astray in so godly a household, where I had none but the most holy and religious examples before my eyes. I knew not what answer to make to this address; I felt my cheeks burn and my eyes involuntarily cast down. All these indications of shame and confusion were construed to my disadvantage, until, at length, sick at heart, and weary, and disgusted, my very life seemed a burden to me, and many times I felt tempted to destroy myself; but the thoughts of my parents, my poor brothers and sisters, that my small earnings helped to maintain, deterred me from ending my sorrows by death. I therefore resigned myself to my wretched fate, finding one consolation, amidst the degradation of my lot, in the thought that, at least, I had preserved my father from the horrors of a prison. But a fresh misfortune overwhelmed me; I became *enceinte*. I now felt myself lost indeed. A secret presentiment assured me that, when M. Ferrand became aware of a circumstance which ought, at least, to have

rendered him less harsh and cruel, he would treat me even more unkindly than before. I was still, however, far from expecting what afterwards occurred."

At this moment, Morel, recovering from his temporary abstraction, gazed around him, as though trying to collect his ideas, then, pressing his hand upon his forehead, looked at his daughter with an inquiring glance, and said:

"I fancy I have been ill, or something is wrong with my head — grief — fatigue — tell me, my child — what were you saying just now? I seem almost unable to recollect."

"When," continued Louise, unheeding her father's look, "when M. Ferrand discovered that I was likely to become a mother — "

Here the lapidary waved his hand in despairing agony, but Rodolph calmed him by an imploring look.

"Yes, yes," said Morel, "let me hear all; 'tis fit and right the tale should be told. Go on, go on, my girl, and I will listen from beginning to end."

Louise went on. "I besought M. Ferrand to tell me by what means I should conceal my shame, and the consequence of a crime of which he was the author. Alas, dear father, I can scarcely hope or believe you will credit what I am about to tell you."

"What did he say? Speak."

"Interrupting me with much indignation and well-feigned surprise, he affected not to understand my meaning, and even inquired whether I had not lost my senses. Terrified, I exclaimed, 'Oh, sir, what is to become of me? Alas, if you have no pity on me, pity at least the poor infant that must soon see the light!'

"'What a lost, depraved character!' cried M. Ferrand, raising his clasped hands towards heaven. 'Horrible, indeed! Why, you poor, wretched girl, is it possible that you have the audacity to accuse me of disgracing myself by any illicit acquaintance with a person of your

infamous description? Can it be that you have the hardihood to lay the fruits of your immoral conduct and gross irregularity at my door, — I, who have repeated a hundred times, in the presence of respectable witnesses, that you would come to ruin some day, vile profligate that you are? Quit my house this instant, or I will drive you out!'"

Rodolph and Morel were struck with horror; a system of wickedness like this seemed to freeze their blood.

"By Heaven!" said Rodolph, "this surpasses any horrors that imagination could have conceived."

Morel did not speak, but his eyes expanded fearfully, whilst a convulsive spasm contracted his features. He quitted the stool on which he was sitting, opened a drawer suddenly, and, taking out a long and very sharp file, fixed in a wooden handle, he rushed towards the door. Rodolph, guessing his thoughts, seized his arm, and stopped his progress.

"Morel, where are you going? You will do a mischief, unhappy man!"

"Take care," exclaimed the infuriated artisan, struggling, "or I shall commit two crimes instead of one!" and the madman threatened Rodolph.

"Father, it is our benefactor!" exclaimed Louise.

"He is jesting at us; he wants to save the notary," replied Morel, quite crazed, and struggling with Rodolph. At the end of a second, the latter disarmed him, carefully opened the door, and threw the file out on the staircase. Louise ran to the lapidary, embraced him, and said:

"Father, it is our benefactor! You have raised your hand against him, — recover yourself."

These words recalled Morel to himself, and hiding his face in his hands, he fell mutely on his knees before Rodolph.

"Rise, rise, unhappy father," said Rodolph, in accents

of great kindness; "be patient, be patient, I understand your wrath and share your hatred; but, in the name of your vengeance, do not compromise your daughter!"

"Louise! — my daughter!" cried the lapidary, rising, "but what can justice — the law — do against that? We are but poor wretches, and were we to accuse this rich, powerful, and respected man, we should be laughed to scorn. Ha! ha! ha!" and he laughed convulsively, "and they would be right. Where would be our proofs? — yes, our proofs? No one would believe us. So, I tell you — I tell you," he added, with increased fury, "I tell you that I have no confidence but in the impartiality of my knife."

"Silence, Morel! your grief distracts you," said Rodolph to him sorrowfully; "let your daughter speak; the moments are precious; the magistrate waits; I must know all, — all, I tell you; go on, my child."

Morel fell back on the stool, overwhelmed with his anguish.

"It is useless, sir," continued Louise, "to tell you of my tears, my prayers. I was thunderstruck. This took place at ten o'clock in the morning in M. Ferrand's private room. The curate was coming to breakfast with him, and entered at the moment when my master was assailing me with reproach and accusations. He appeared much put out at the sight of the priest."

"What occurred then?"

"Oh, he soon recovered himself, and exclaimed, call-him by name, 'Well, Monsieur l'Abbé, I said so, I said this unhappy girl would be undone. She is ruined, ruined for ever; she has just confessed to me her fault and her shame, and entreated me to save her. Only think that, from commiseration, I have received such a wanton into my house!' 'How,' said the abbé to me with indignation, 'in spite of the excellent counsels which your master has given you a hundred times in

my presence, have you really sunk so low? Oh, it is unpardonable! My friend, my friend, after the kindness you have evinced towards this wretched girl and her family, any pity would be weakness. Be inexorable,' said the abbé, the dupe, like the rest of the world, of M. Ferrand's hypocrisy."

"And you did not unmask the scoundrel on the spot?" ask Rodolph.

"Ah, no! monsieur, I was terrified, my head was in a whirl, I did not dare, I could not pronounce a word, — yet I was anxious to speak and defend myself. 'But sir —' I cried. 'Not one word more, unworthy creature,' said M. Ferrand, interrupting me. 'You heard M. l'Abbé. Pity would be weakness. In an hour you leave my house!' Then, without allowing me time to reply, he led the abbé into another room. After the departure of M. Ferrand," resumed Louise, "I was almost bereft of my senses for a moment. I was driven from his house, and unable to find any home elsewhere, in consequence of my condition, and the bad character which my master would give with me. I felt sure, too, that in his rage he would send my father to prison; and I did not know what to do. I went to my room, and there I wept bitterly. At the end of two hours M. Ferrand appeared. 'Is your bundle made up?' said he. 'Pardon,' I exclaimed, falling at his feet, 'do not turn me from your house in my present condition. What will become of me? I have no place to turn to.' 'So much the better; this is the way that God punishes loose behaviour and falsehood.' 'Dare you say that I tell falsehood?' I asked, indignantly, 'dare you say that it is not you who have caused my ruin?' 'Leave my house this moment, you wretch, since you persist in your calumnies!' he replied in a terrible voice; 'and to punish you I will to-morrow send your father to the gaol.' 'Well, no, no!' said I, terrified; 'I will not again accuse you, sir; that I promise you; but

do not drive me away from the house. Have pity on my father. The little I earn here helps to support my family. Keep me here; I will say nothing. I will endeavour to hide every thing; and when I can no longer do so, oh, then, but not till then, send me away!' After fresh entreaties on my part, M. Ferrand consented to keep me with him; and I considered that a great favour in my wretched condition. During the time that followed this cruel scene, I was most wretched, and miserably treated; only sometimes M. Germain, whom I seldom saw, kindly asked me what made me unhappy; but shame prevented me from confessing anything to him."

"Was not that about the time when he came to reside here?"

"Yes, sir, he was looking out for an apartment near the Rue du Temple or de l'Arsenal. There was one to let here, and I told him of that one which you now occupy, sir, and it suited him exactly. When he quitted it, about two months ago, he begged me not to mention his new address here, but that they knew it at M. Ferrand's."

The necessity under which Germain was to conceal himself from those who were trying to find him explained all these precautions to Rodolph.

"And it never occurred to you to make a confidant of Germain?" he said to Louise.

"No, sir, he was also a dupe to the hypocrisy of M. Ferrand; he called him harsh and exacting; but he thought him the honestest man on the face of the earth."

"When Germain was lodging here, did he never hear your father at times accuse the notary of desiring to seduce you?"

"My father never expressed his fears before strangers; and besides, at this period, I deceived his uneasiness, and comforted him by the assurances that M. Ferrand no longer thought of me. Alas! my poor father will now

forgive me those falsehoods? I only employed them to tranquillise your mind, father dear, that was all."

Morel made no reply; he only leaned his forehead on his two arms, crossed on his working-board, and sobbed bitterly.

Rodolph made a sign to Louise not to address herself to her father, and she continued thus:

"I led from this time a life of tears and perpetual anguish. By using every precaution, I had contrived to conceal my condition from all eyes; but I could not hope thus to hide it during the last two months. The future became more and more alarming to me, as M. Ferrand had declared that he would not keep me any longer in the house; and therefore I should be deprived of the small resources which assisted our family to live. Cursed and driven from my home by my father, for, after the falsehoods I had told him to set his mind at ease, he would believe me the accomplice, and not the victim of M. Ferrand, what was to become of me? where could I find refuge or place myself in my condition? I then had a criminal idea; but, fortunately, I recoiled from putting it into execution. I confess this to you, sir, because I will not keep any thing concealed, not even that which may tell against myself; and thus I may show you the extremities to which I was reduced by the cruelty of M. Ferrand. If I had given way to such a thought, would he not have been the accomplice of my crime?"

After a moment's silence, Louise resumed with great effort, and in a trembling voice:

"I had heard say by the porteress that a quack doctor lived in the house, — and, —"

She could not finish.

Rodolph recollected that, at his first interview with Madame Pipelet, he had received from the postman, in her absence, a letter written on coarse paper, in a feigned hand, and on which he had remarked the traces of tears.

"And you wrote to him, unhappy girl, three days since? You wept over your letter; and the handwriting was disguised."

Louise looked at Rodolph in great consternation.

"How did you know that, sir?"

"Do not alarm yourself; I was alone in Madame Pipelet's lodge when they brought in the letter; and I remarked it quite accidentally."

"Yes, sir, it was mine. In this letter, which bore no signature, I wrote to M. Bradamanti, saying that, as I did not dare to go to him, I would beg him to be in the evening near the Château d'Eau. I had lost my senses. I sought fearful advice from him; and I left my master's house with the intention of following them; but, at the end of a minute, my reason returned to me, and I saw what a crime I was about to commit. I returned to the house, and did not attend the appointment I had written for. That evening an event occurred, the consequences of which caused the misfortune which has overwhelmed me. M. Ferrand thought I had gone out for a couple of hours, whilst, in reality, I had been gone but a very short time. As I passed before the small garden gate, to my great surprise I saw it half open. I entered by it, and took the key into M. Ferrand's private room, where it was usually kept. This apartment was next to his bedroom, the most retired place in the house; and it was there he had his private meetings with clients and others, transacting his every-day business in the office. You will see, sir, why I give you these particulars. As I very well knew the ways of the apartments, after having crossed the dining-room, which was lighted up, I entered into the salon without any candle, and then into the little closet, which was on this side of his sleeping-room. The door of this latter opened at the moment when I was putting the key on a table; and the moment my master saw me by the light of the lamp, which was burning in his chamber, then he suddenly shut the door on some

person whom I could not see, and then, in spite of the darkness, rushed towards me and, seizing me by the throat as if he would strangle me, said, in a low voice, and in a tone at once savage and alarmed, 'What! listening! — spying at the door! What did you hear? Answer me, — answer directly, or I'll strangle you.' But, suddenly changing his idea, and not giving me time to say a word, he drove me back into the dining-room; the office door was open, and he brutally thrust me in and shut the door."

"And you did not hear the conversation?"

"Not a word, sir; if I had known that there was any one in his room with him, I should have been careful not to have gone there. He even forbade Madame Séraphin from doing so."

"And, when you left the office, what did he say to you?"

"It was the housekeeper who let me out, and I did not see M. Ferrand again that night. His violence to me, and the fright I had undergone, made me very ill indeed. The next day, at the moment when I went down-stairs, I met M. Ferrand, and I shuddered when I remembered his threats of the night before; what then was my surprise when he said to me calmly, 'You knew that I forbid any one to enter my private room when I have any person there; but, for the short time longer you will stay here, it is useless to scold you any more.' And then he went into his study. This mildness astonished me after his violence of the previous evening. I went on with my work as usual, and was going to put his bedchamber to rights. I had suffered a great deal all night, and was weak and exhausted. Whilst I was hanging up some clothes in a dark closet at the end of the room near the bed, I was suddenly seized with a painful giddiness, and felt as if I should lose my senses; as I fell, I tried to support myself by grasping at a large cloak which hung against the wainscot; but in my fall I drew this cloak down on me, and was almost entirely covered

by it. When I came to myself, the glass door of the above closet was shut. I heard M. Ferrand's voice, — he was speaking aloud. Remembering the scene of the previous evening, I thought I should be killed if I stirred. I suppose that, hidden by the cloak which had fallen on me, my master did not perceive me when he shut the door of this dark wardrobe. If he found me, how could I account for, and make him believe, this singular accident? I, therefore, held my breath, and in spite of myself, overheard the conclusion of this conversation which, no doubt had begun some time."

"And who was the person who was talking with the notary and shut up in this room with him?" inquired Rodolph of Louise.

"I do not know, sir; I did not recognise the voice."

"And what were they saying?"

"No doubt they had been conversing some time; but all I heard was this: 'Nothing more easy,' said the unknown voice; 'a fellow named Bras Rouge has put me, for the affair I mentioned to you just now, in connection with a family of "fresh-water pirates,"[1] established on the point of a small islet near Asnières. They are the greatest scoundrels on earth; the father and grandfather were guillotined; two of the sons were condemned to the galleys for life; but there are still left a mother, three sons, and two daughters, all as infamous as they can possibly be. They say that at night, in order to plunder on both sides of the Seine, they sometimes come down in their boats as low as Bercy. They are ruffians, who will kill any one for a crown-piece; but we shall not want their aid further than their hospitality for your lady from the country. The Martials — that is the name of these pirates — will pass in her eyes for an honest family of fishers. I will go, as if from you, to pay two or three visits to your young lady. I will order her a few comforting draughts; and at the end of a week or ten days,

[1] We shall hear more particulars of these worthies in another chapter.

she will form an acquaintance with the burial-ground of Asnières. In villages, deaths are looked on as nothing more than a letter by the post, whilst in Paris they are a little more curious in such matters. But when do you send your young lady from the provinces to the isle of Asnières, for I must give the Martials notice of the part they have to play?' 'She will arrive here to-morrow, and next day I shall send her to them,' replied M. Ferrand; 'and I shall tell her that Doctor Vincent will pay her a visit at my request.' 'Ah, Vincent will do as well as any other name,' said the voice."

"What new mystery of crime and infamy?" said Rodolph, with increased astonishment.

"New? No, sir, you will see that it is in connection with another crime that you know of," resumed Louise, who thus continued: "I heard a movement of chairs,—the interview had ended. 'I do not ask the secret of you,' said M. Ferrand, 'you behave to me as I behave to you.' 'Thus we may mutually serve without any power mutually to injure each other,' answered the voice. 'Observe my zeal! I received your letter at ten o'clock last night, and here I am this morning. Good-by, accomplice; do not forget the isle of Asnières, the fisher Martial, and Doctor Vincent. Thanks to these three magic words, your country damsel has only eight days to look forward to.' 'Wait,' said M. Ferrand, 'whilst I go and undo the safety-bolt, which I have drawn to in my closet, and let me look out and see that there is no one in the antechamber, in order that you may go out by the side path in the garden by which you entered.' M. Ferrand went out for a moment, and then returned; and I heard him go away with the person whose voice I did not know. You may imagine my fright, sir, during this conversation, and my despair at having unintentionally discovered such a secret. Two hours after this conversation, Madame Séraphin came to me in my room, whither I had gone, trembling all over, and worse

than I had been yet. 'My master is inquiring for you,' said she to me; 'you are better off than you deserve to be. Come, go down-stairs. You are very pale; but what you are going to hear will give you a colour.' I followed Madame Séraphin, and found M. Ferrand in his private study. When I saw him, I shuddered in spite of myself, and yet he did not look so disagreeable as usual. He looked at me steadfastly for some time, as if he would read the bottom of my thoughts. I lowered my eyes. 'You seem very ill?' he said. 'Yes, sir,' I replied, much surprised at being thus addressed. 'It is easily accounted for,' added he; 'it is the result of your condition and the efforts you make to conceal it; but, in spite of your falsehoods, your bad conduct, and your indiscretion yesterday,' he added, in a milder tone, 'I feel pity for you. A few days more, and it will be impossible to conceal your situation. Although I have treated you as you deserve before the curate of the parish, such an event in the eyes of the world will be the disgrace of a house like mine; and, moreover, your family will be deeply distressed. Under these circumstances I will come to your aid.' 'Ah! sir,' I cried, 'such kind words from you make me forget everything.' 'Forget what?' asked he, hastily. 'Nothing, — nothing, — forgive me, sir!' I replied, fearful of irritating him, and believing him kindly disposed towards me. 'Then attend to me,' said he; 'you will go to see your father to-day, and tell him that I am going to send you into the country for two or three months, to take care of a house which I have just bought. During your absence I will send your wages to him. To-morrow you will leave Paris. I will give you a letter of introduction to Madame Martial, the mother of an honest family of fishers, who live near Asnières. You will say you came from the country and nothing more. You will learn hereafter my motive for this introduction, which is for your good. Madame Martial will treat you as one of the family, and a med-

ical man of my acquaintance, Dr. Vincent, will give you all you require in your situation. You see how kind I am to you!'"

"What a horrible snare!" exclaimed Rodolph; "I see it all now. Believing that overnight you had listened to some secret, no doubt very important for him, he desired to get rid of you. He had probably an interest in deceiving his accomplice by describing you as a female from the country. What must have been your alarm at this proposal?"

"It was like a violent blow; it quite bereft me of sense. I could not reply, but looked at M. Ferrand aghast; my head began to wander. I should, perhaps, have risked my life by telling him that I had overheard his projects in the morning, when fortunately I recollected the fresh perils to which such an avowal would expose me. 'You do not understand me, then?' he said, impatiently. 'Yes, sir,—but,' I added, all trembling, 'I should prefer not going into the country.' 'Why not? You will be taken every care of where I send you.' 'No, no, I will not go; I would rather remain in Paris, and not go away from my family; I would rather confess all to them, and die with them, if it must be so.' 'You refuse me, then?' said M. Ferrand, repressing his rage, and looking fixedly at me. 'Why have you so suddenly changed your mind? Not a minute ago you accepted my offer.' I saw that if he guessed my motive I was lost, so I replied that I did not then think that he desired me to leave Paris and my family. 'But you dishonour your family, you wretched girl!' he exclaimed, and unable any longer to restrain himself, he seized me by the arms, and shook me so violently that I fell. 'I will give you until the day after to-morrow,' he cried, 'and then you shall go from here to the Martials, or go and inform your father that I have turned you out of my house, and will send him to gaol to-morrow.' He then left me, stretched on the floor,

whence I had not the power to rise. Madame Séraphin had run in when she heard her master raise his voice so loud, and with her assistance, and staggering at every step, I regained my chamber, where I threw myself on my bed, and remained until night, so entirely was I prostrated by all that had happened. By the pains that came on about one o'clock in the morning, I felt assured that I should be prematurely a mother."

"Why did you not summon assistance?"

"Oh, I did not dare. M. Ferrand was anxious to get rid of me, and he would certainly have sent for Dr. Vincent, who would have killed me at my master's instead of killing me at the Martials, or else M. Ferrand would have stifled me, and said that I had died in my confinement. Alas, sir, perhaps these were vain terrors, but they came over me at this moment and caused my suffering; otherwise I would have endured the shame, and should never have been accused of killing my child. Instead of calling for help, and for fear my cries should be heard, I stuffed my mouth full with the bedclothes. At length, after dreadful anguish, alone, in the midst of darkness, the child was born, and, — dead, — I did not kill it! — indeed, I did not kill it, — ah, no! In the midst of this fearful night I had one moment of bitter joy, and that was when I pressed my child in my arms."

And the voice of Louise was stifled with sobs.

Morel had listened to his daughter's recital with a mournful apathy and indifference which alarmed Rodolph. However, seeing her burst into tears, the lapidary, who was still leaning on his work-board with his two hands pressed against his temples, looked at Louise steadfastly, and said:

"She weeps, — she weeps, — why is she weeping?" Then, after a moment's hesitation, "Ah, yes, — I know, I know, — the notary, — isn't it? Go on my poor Louise, — you are my daughter, — I love you still, — just now I did not recognise you, — my eyes were dark-

ened with my tears, — oh, my head, — how badly it aches, — my head, my head!"

"You do not believe me guilty, do you, father, do you?"

"Oh, no, no!"

"It is a terrible misfortune; but I was so fearful of the notary."

"The notary? Ah, yes, and well you might be; he is so wicked, so very wicked!"

"But you will forgive me now?"

"Yes, yes."

"Really and truly?"

"Yes — ah, yes! Ah! I love you the same as ever, — although I cannot — not say — you see —because — oh, my head, my head!"

Louise looked at Rodolph in extreme alarm.

"He is suffering deeply; but let him calm himself. Go on."

Louise, after looking twice or thrice at Morel with great disquietude, thus resumed:

"I clasped my infant to my breast, and was astonished at not hearing it breathe. I said to myself, 'The breathing of a baby is so faint that it is difficult to hear it.' But then it was so cold. I had no light, for they never would leave one with me. I waited until the dawn came, trying to keep it warm as well as I could; but it seemed to me colder and colder. I said to myself then; 'It freezes so hard that it must be the cold that chills it so.' At daybreak I carried my child to the window and looked at it; it was stiff and cold. I placed my mouth to its mouth, to try and feel its breath. I put my hand on its heart; but it did not beat; it was dead."

And Louise burst into tears.

"Oh! at this moment," she continued, "something passed within me which it is impossible to describe. I only remember confusedly what followed, — it was

like a dream, — it was at once despair, terror, rage, and above all, I was seized with another fear; I no longer feared M. Ferrand would strangle me, but I feared that, if they found my child dead by my side, I should be accused of having killed it. Then I had but one thought, and that was to conceal the corpse from everybody's sight; and then my dishonour would not be known, and I should no longer have to dread my father's anger. I should escape from M. Ferrand's vengeance, because I could now leave his house, obtain another situation, and gain something to help and support my family. Alas! sir, such were the reasons which induced me not to say any thing, but try and hide my child's remains from all eyes. I was wrong, I know; but, in the situation in which I was, oppressed on all sides, worn out by suffering, and almost mad, I did not consider to what I exposed myself if I should be discovered."

"What torture! what torture!" said Rodolph with deep sympathy.

"The day was advancing," continued Louise, "and I had but a few moments before me until the household would be stirring. I hesitated no longer, but, wrapping up the unhappy babe as well as I could, I descended the staircase silently, and went to the bottom of the garden to try and make a hole in the ground to bury it; but it had frozen so hard in the night that I could not dig up the earth. So I concealed the body in the bottom of a sort of cellar, into which no one entered during the winter, and then I covered it up with an empty box which had held flowers, and returned to my apartment, without any person having seen me. Of all I tell you, sir, I have but a very confused recollection. Weak as I was, it is inexplicable to me how I had strength and courage to do all I did. At nine o'clock Madame Séraphin came to inquire why I had not risen. I told her that I was so very ill, and prayed of her to allow me to remain in bed during the day, and that on the follow-

ing day I should quit the house, as M. Ferrand had dismissed me. At the end of an hour's time, he came himself. 'You are worse to-day. Ah! that is the consequence of your obstinacy,' said he; 'if you had taken advantage of my kind offer, you would to-day have been comfortably settled with some worthy people, who would have taken every care of you; but I will not be so cruel as to leave you without help in your present situation; and this evening Doctor Vincent shall come and see you.' At this threat I shuddered; but I replied to M. Ferrand that I was wrong to refuse his offers the evening before, and that I would now accept them; but that, being too ill to move then, I could not go until the day after the next to the Martials, and that it was useless to send for Doctor Vincent. I only sought to gain time, for I had made up my mind to leave the house, and go the next day to my father, whom I hoped to keep in ignorance of all. Relying on my promise, M. Ferrand was almost kind to me, and, for the first time in his life, recommended Madame Séraphin to take care of me. I passed the day in mental agony, trembling every instant lest the body of my child should be accidentally discovered. I was only anxious that the frost should break up, so that, the ground not being so hard, I might be able to dig it up. The snow began to fall, and that gave me some hopes. I remained all day in bed, and when the night came, I waited until every one should be asleep, and then I summoned strength enough to rise and go to the wood-closet, where I found a chopper, with which I hoped to dig a hole in the ground which was covered with snow. After immense trouble I succeeded, and then, taking the body, I wept bitterly over it, and buried it as well as I could in the little box that had held flowers. I did not know the prayer for the dead; but I said a Pater and an Ave, and prayed to the good God to receive it into Paradise. I thought my courage would fail me when I was covering the mould

over the sort of bier I had made. A mother burying her own child! At length I completed my task, and ah, what it cost me! I covered the place all over with snow, that it might conceal every trace of what I had done. The moon had lighted me; yet, when all was done, I could hardly resolve to go away. Poor little innocent!— in the icy ground, — beneath the snow! Although it was dead, yet I still seemed to fear that it must feel the cold. At length I returned to my chamber; and when I got into bed I was in a violent fever. In the morning M. Ferrand sent to know how I found myself. I replied that I was a little better, and that I felt sure I should be strong enough to go next day into the country. I remained the whole of the day in bed, hoping to acquire a little strength, and in the evening I arose and went down into the kitchen to warm myself. I was then quite alone, and then went out into the garden to to say a last prayer. As I went up to my room I met M. Germain on the landing-place of the study in which he wrote sometimes, looking very pale. He said to me hastily, placing a rouleau of money in my hand, 'They are going to arrest your father to-morrow morning for an over-due bill of thirteen hundred francs; he is unable to pay it; but here is the money. As soon as it is light, run to him. It was only to-day that I found out what sort of a man M. Ferrand is; and he is a villain. I will unmask him. Above all, do not say that you have the money from me.'

"M. Germain did not even give me time to thank him, but ran quickly down-stairs. This morning," continued Louise, "before any one had risen at M. Ferrand's, I came here with the money which M. Germain had given me to save my father; but it was not enough, and but for your generosity, I could not have rescued him from the bailiff's hands. Probably, after I had left, they went into my room and, having suspicions, have now sent to arrest me. One last service, sir," said Louise, taking

the rouleau of gold from her pocket, "will you give back this money to M. Germain; I had promised him not to say to any one that he was employed at M. Ferrand's; but, since you know it, I have not broken my confidence. Now, sir, I repeat to you before God, who hears me, that I have not said a word that is not quite true; I have not tried to hide my faults, and —"

But, suddenly interrupting herself, Louise exclaimed with alarm:

"Sir, sir, look at my father! what can be the matter with him?"

Morel had heard the latter part of this narration with a dull indifference, which Rodolph had accounted for by attributing it to the heavy additional misfortune which had occurred to him. After such violent and repeated shocks, his tears must have dried up, his sensibility have become lost; he had not even the strength left to feel anger, as Rodolph thought; but Rodolph was mistaken. As the flame of a candle which is nearly extinguished dies away and recovers, so Morel's reason, already much shaken, wavered for some time, throwing out now and then some small rays of intelligence, and then suddenly all was darkness.

Absolutely unconscious of what was said or passing around him, for some time the lapidary had become quite insane. Although his hand-wheel was placed on the other side of his working-table, and he had not in his hands either stones or tools, yet the occupied artisan was feigning the operations of his daily labour, and affecting to use his implements. He accompanied this pantomime with a sort of noise with his tongue against the roof of his mouth, in imitation of the noise of his lathe in its rotatory motions.

"But, sir," said Louise again, with increasing fright, "look, pray look at my father!"

Then, approaching the artisan, she said to him:

"Father! father!"

Morel gazed on his daughter with that troubled, vague, distracted, wandering look which characterises the insane, and without discontinuing his assumed labour, he replied, in a low and melancholy tone:

"I owe the notary thirteen hundred francs; it is the price of Louise's blood, — so I must work, work, work! — oh, I'll pay, I'll pay, I'll pay!"

"Can it be possible? This cannot be, — he is not mad, — no, no!" exclaimed Louise, in a heart-rending voice. "He will recover, — it is but a momentary fit of absence!"

"Morel, my good fellow," said Rodolph to him, "we are here. Your daughter is near you, — she is innocent."

"Thirteen hundred francs!" said the lapidary, not attending to Rodolph, but going on with his sham employment.

"My father!" exclaimed Louise, throwing herself at his feet, and clasping his hands in her own, in spite of his resistance, "it is I — it is your Louise!"

"Thirteen hundred francs," he repeated, wresting his hands from the grasp of his daughter. "Thirteen hundred francs, — and if not," he added, in a low and as it were, confidential tone, "and if not, Louise is to be guillotined."

And again he imitated the turning of his lathe.

Louise gave a piercing shriek.

"He is mad!" she exclaimed, "he is mad! and it is I — it is I who am the cause! Oh! Yet it is not my fault, — I did not desire to do ill, — it was that monster."

"Courage, courage, my poor girl," said Rodolph, "let us hope that this attack is but momentary. Your father has suffered so much; so many troubles, all at once, were more than he could bear. His reason wanders for a moment; it will soon be restored."

"But my mother, my grandmother, my sisters, my

brothers, what will become of them all?" exclaimed Louise, "Now they are deprived of my father and myself, they must die of hunger, misery and despair!"

"Am I not here?—make your mind easy; they shall want for nothing. Courage, I say to you. Your disclosure will bring about the punishment of a great criminal. You have convinced me of your innocence, and I have no doubt but that it will be discovered and proclaimed."

"Ah, sir, you see,—dishonour, madness, death,—see the miseries which that man causes, and yet no one can do any thing against him! Nothing! The very thought completes all my wretchedness."

"So far from that, let the contrary thought help to support you."

"What mean you, sir?"

"Take with you the assurance that your father, yourself, and your family shall be avenged."

"Avenged!"

"Yes, that I swear to you," replied Rodolph, solemnly; "I swear to you that his crimes shall be exposed, and this man shall bitterly expiate the dishonour, madness, and death which he has caused. If the laws are powerless to reach him, if his cunning and skill equal his misdeeds, then his cunning must be met by cunning, his skill must be counteracted by skill, his misdeeds faced by other misdeeds, but which shall be to his but a just and avenging retribution, inflicted on a guilty wretch by an inexorable hand, when compared to a cowardly and base murder."

"Ah, sir, may Heaven hear you! It is no longer myself whom I seek to avenge, but a poor, distracted father,—my child killed in its birth—"

Then, trying another effort to turn Morel from his insanity, Louise again exclaimed:

"Adieu, father! They are going to lead me to prison, and I shall never see you again. It is your poor Louise

who bids you adieu. My father! my father! my father!"

To this distressing appeal there was no response. In that poor, destroyed mind there was no echo, — none. The paternal cords, always the last broken, no longer vibrated.

The door of the garret opened; the commissary entered.

"My moments are numbered, sir," said he to Rodolph. "I declare to you with much regret that I cannot allow this conversation to be protracted any longer."

"This conversation is ended, sir," replied Rodolph, bitterly, and pointing to the lapidary. "Louise has nothing more to say to her father, — he has nothing more to hear from his daughter, — he is a lunatic."

"I feared as much. It is really frightful!" exclaimed the magistrate.

And approaching the workman hastily, after a minute's scrutiny, he was convinced of the sad reality.

"Ah, sir," said he sorrowfully to Rodolph, "I had already expressed my sincerest wishes that the innocence of this young girl might be discovered; but after such a misfortune I will not confine myself to good wishes, — no, — no! I will speak of this honest and distressed family; I will speak of this fearful and last blow which has overwhelmed it; and do not doubt but that the judges will have an additional motive to find the accused innocent."

"Thanks, thanks, sir!" said Rodolph; "by acting thus it will not be a mere duty that you fulfil, but a holy office which you undertake."

"Believe me, sir, our duty is always such a painful one that it is most grateful to us to be interested in any thing which is worthy and good."

"One word more, sir. The disclosures of Louise

Morel have fully convinced me of her innocence. Will you be so kind as inform me how her pretended crime was discovered, or rather denounced?"

"This morning," said the magistrate, "a housekeeper in the service of M. Ferrand, the notary, came and deposed before me that, after the hasty departure of Louise Morel, whom she knew to be seven months advanced in the family way, she went into the young girl's apartment, and was convinced that she had been prematurely confined; footsteps had been traced in the snow, which had led to the detection of the body of a new-born child buried in the garden. After this declaration I went myself to the Rue du Sentier, and found M. Jacques Ferrand most indignant that such a scandalous affair should have happened in his house. The curé of the church Bonne Nouvelle, whom he had sent for, also declared to me that Louise Morel had owned her fault in his presence one day, when, on this account, she was imploring the indulgence and pity of her master; that, besides, he had often heard M. Ferrand give Louise Morel the most serious warnings, telling her that, sooner or later, she would be lost, — 'a prediction,' added the abbé, 'which has been unfortunately fulfilled.' The indignation of M. Ferrand," continued the magistrate, "seemed to me so just and natural, that I shared in it. He told me that, no doubt, Louise Morel had taken refuge with her father. I came hither instantly, for the crime being flagrant, I was empowered to proceed by immediate apprehension."

Rodolph with difficulty restrained himself when he heard of the indignation of M. Ferrand, and said to the magistrate:

"I thank you a thousand times, sir, for your kindness, and the support you promise Louise. I will take care that this poor man, as well as his wife's mother, are sent to a lunatic asylum."

Then, addressing Louise, who was still kneeling close

to her father, endeavouring, but vainly, to recall him to his senses:

"Make up your mind, my poor girl, to go without taking leave of your mother, — spare her the pain of such a parting. Be assured that she shall be taken care of, and nothing shall in future be wanting to your family, for a woman shall be found who will take care of your mother and occupy herself with your brothers, and sisters, under the superintendence of your kind neighbour, Mlle. Rigolette. As for your father, nothing shall be spared to make his return to reason as rapid as it is complete. Courage! Believe me, honest people are often severely tried by misfortune, but they always come out of these struggles more pure, more strong, and more respected.'

Two hours after the apprehension of Louise, the lapidary and the old idiot mother were, by Rodolph's orders, taken to the Bicêtre by David, where they were to be kept in private rooms and to receive particular care. Morel left the house in the Rue du Temple without resistance; indifferent as he was, he went wherever they led him, — his lunacy was gentle, inoffensive, and melancholy. The grandmother was hungry, and when they showed her bread and meat she followed the bread and meat. The jewels of the lapidary, entrusted to his wife, were the same day given to Madame Mathieu (the jewel-matcher), who fetched them. Unfortunately she was watched and followed by Tortillard, who knew the value of the pretended false stones in consequence of the conversation he had overheard during the time Morel was arrested by the bailiffs. The son of Bras Rouge discovered that she lived, Boulevard Saint-Denis, No. 11.

Rigolette apprised Madeleine Morel, with considerable delicacy, of the fit of lunacy which had attacked the lapidary, and of Louise's imprisonment. At first, Made-

leine wept bitterly, and uttered terrible shrieks; then, the first burst of her grief over, the poor creature, weak and overcome, consoled herself as well as she could by seeing that she and her children were surrounded by the many comforts which she owed to the generosity of their benefactor.

As to Rodolph, his thoughts were very poignant when he considered the disclosures of Louise. "Nothing is more common," he said, "than this corrupting of the female servant by the master, either by consent or against it; sometimes by terror and surprise, sometimes by the imperious nature of those relations which create servitude. This depravity, descending from the rich to the poor, despising (in its selfish desire) the sanctity of the domestic hearth, — this depravity, still most deplorable when it is voluntarily submitted to, becomes hideous, frightful, when it is satisfied with violence. It is an impure and brutal slavery, an ignoble and barbarous tyranny over a fellow-creature, who in her fright replies to the solicitations of her master by her tears, and to his declarations with a shudder of fear and disgust. And then," continued Rodolph, "what is the consequence to the female? Almost invariably there follow degradation, misery, prostitution, theft, and sometimes infanticide! And yet the laws are, as yet, strangers to this crime! Every accomplice of a crime has the punishment of that crime; every receiver is considered as guilty as the thief. That is justice. But when a man wantonly seduces a young, innocent, and pure girl, renders her a mother, abandons her, leaving her but shame, disgrace, despair, and driving her, perchance, to infanticide, a crime for which she forfeits her life, is this man considered as her accomplice? Pooh! What, then, follows? Oh, 'tis nothing, — nothing but a little love-affair! the whim of the day for a pair of bright eyes. Then she is left, and he looks out for the next. Still more, it is just possible that the man may be of an original, an

inquisitive turn, perhaps, at the same time, an excellent brother and son, and may go to the bar of the criminal court and see his paramour tried for her life! If by chance he should be subpœnaed as a witness, he may amuse himself by saying to the persons desirous of having the poor girl executed as soon as possible, for the greater edification of the public morals, 'I have something important to disclose to justice.' 'Speak!' 'Gentlemen of the jury, — This unhappy female was pure and virtuous, it is true. I seduced her, — that is equally true; she bore me a child, — that is also true. After that, as she has a light complexion, I completely forsook her for a pretty brunette, — that is still more true; but, in doing so, I have only followed out an imprescriptible right, a sacred right which society recognizes and accords to me.' 'The truth is, this young man is perfectly in the right,' the jury would say one to another; 'there is no law which prevents a young man from seducing a fair girl, and then forsaking her for a brunette; he is a gay young chap, and that's all.' 'Now, gentlemen of the jury, this unhappy girl is said to have killed her child, — I will say our child, — because I abandoned her; because, finding herself alone and in the deepest misery, she became frightened, and lost her senses! And wherefore? Because having, as she says, to bring up and feed her child, it was impossible that she could continue to work regularly at her occupation, and gain a livelihood for herself and this pledge of our love! But I think these reasons quite unworthy of consideration, allow me to say, gentlemen of the jury. Could she not have gone to the Lying-in Hospital, if there was room for her? Could she not, at the critical moment, have gone to the magistrate of her district and made a declaration of her shame, so that she might have had authority for placing her child in the Enfants Trouvés? In fact, could she not, whilst I was playing billiards at the coffee-house, whilst awaiting my other mistress, could she not have extricated herself

from this affair by some genteeler mode than this? For, gentlemen of the jury, I will admit that I consider this way of disposing of the pledge of our loves as rather too unceremonious and rude, under the idea of thus quietly escaping all future care and trouble. What, is it enough for a young girl to lose her character, brave contempt, infamy, and have an illegitimate child? No; but she must also educate the child, take care of it, bring it up, give it a business, and make an honest man of it, if it be a boy, like its father; or an honest girl, who does not turn wanton like her mother. For, really, maternity has its sacred duties, and the wretches who trample them under foot are unnatural mothers, who deserve an exemplary and notable punishment; as a proof of which, gentlemen of the jury, I beg you will unhesitatingly hand over this miserable woman to the executioner, and you will thus do your duty like independent, firm, and enlightened citizens. *Dixi!*' 'This gentleman looks at the question in a very moral point of view,' will say some hatmaker or retired furrier, who is foreman of the jury; 'he has done, i'faith, what we should all have done in his place; for the girl is very pretty, though rather pallid in complexion. This gay spark, as the song says:

"'"Has kissed and has prattled with fifty fair maids,
And changed them as oft, do you see;"

and there is no law against that. As to this unfortunate girl, after all, it is her own fault! Why did she not repulse him? Then she would not have committed a crime, — a monstrous crime! which really puts all society to the blush.' And the hatter or the furrier would be right, — perfectly right. What is there to criminate this gentleman? Of what complicity, direct or indirect, moral or material, can he be charged? This lucky rogue has seduced a pretty girl, and he it is who has brought her there; he does not deny it; where is the law that

prevents or punishes him? Society merely says: There are gay young fellows abroad, — let the pretty girls beware! But if a poor wretch, through want or stupidity, constraint, or ignorance of the laws which he cannot read, buys knowingly a rag which has been stolen, he will be sent to the galleys for twenty years as a receiver, if such be the punishment for the theft itself. This is logical, powerful reasoning, — 'Without receivers there would be no thieves, without thieves there would be no receivers.' No, no more pity, then — even less pity — for him who excites to the evil than he who perpetrates it. Let the smallest degree of complicity be visited with terrible punishment! Good; there is in that a serious and fertile thought, high and moral. We should bow before Society which had dictated such a law; but we remember that this Society, so inexorable towards the smallest complicity of crime against things, is so framed that a simple and ingenuous man, who should try to prove that there is at least moral similarity, material complicity, between the fickle seducer and the seduced and forsaken girl, would be laughed at as a visionary. And if this simple man were to assert that without a father there would, in all probability, not be offspring, Society would exclaim against the atrocity, — the folly! And it would be right, — quite right; for, after all, this gay youth who might say these fine things to the jury, however little he might like tragic emotions, might yet go tranquilly to see his mistress executed, — executed for child-murder, a crime to which he was an accessory; nay more, the author, in consequence of his shameless abandonment! Does not this charming protection, granted to the male portion of society for certain gay doings suggested by the god of Love, show plainly that France still sacrifices to the Graces, and is still the most gallant nation in the world?"

CHAPTER III.

JACQUES FERRAND.

At the period when the events were passing which we are now relating, at one end of the Rue du Sentier a long old wall extended, covered with a coat of white-wash, and the top garnished with a row of broken flint-glass bottles; this wall, bounding on one side the garden of Jacques Ferrand, the notary, terminated with a *corps de logis* facing the street, only one story high, with garrets. Two large escutcheons of gilt copper, emblems of the notarial residence, flanked the worm-eaten *porte cochère*, of which the primitive colour was no longer to be distinguished under the mud which covered it. This entrance led to an open passage; on the right was the lodge of an old porter, almost deaf, who was to the body of tailors what M. Pipelet was to the body of boot-makers; on the left a stable, used as a cellar, wash-house, woodhouse, and the establishment of a rising colony of rabbits belonging to the porter, who was dissipating the sorrows of a recent widowhood by bring-ing up these domestic animals. Beside the lodge was the opening of a twisting staircase, narrow and dark, leading to the office, as was announced to the clients by a hand painted black, whose forefinger was directed towards these words, also painted in black upon the wall, "The Office on the first floor."

On one side of a large paved court, overgrown with grass, were empty stables; on the other side, a rusty iron gate, which shut in the garden; at the bottom

the pavilion, inhabited only by the notary. A flight of eight or ten steps of disjointed stones, which were moss-grown and time-worn, led to this square pavilion, consisting of a kitchen and other underground offices, a ground floor, a first floor, and the top rooms, in one of which Louise had slept. The pavilion also appeared in a state of great dilapidation. There were deep chinks in the walls; the window-frames and outside blinds, once painted gray, had become almost black by time; the six windows on the first floor, looking out into the courtyard, had no curtains; a sort of greasy and opaque deposit covered the glass; on the ground floor there were visible through the window-panes more transparent, faded yellow cotton curtains, with red bindings.

On the garden side the pavilion had only four windows. The garden, overgrown with parasitical plants, seemed wholly neglected. There was no flower border, not a bush; a clump of elms; five or six large green trees; some acacias and elder-trees; a yellowish grass-plat, half destroyed by moss and the scorch of the sun; muddy paths, choked up with weeds; at the bottom, a sort of half cellar; for horizon, the high, naked, gray walls of the adjacent houses, having here and there skylights barred like prison windows, — such was the miserable appearance of the garden and dwelling of the notary.

To this appearance, or rather reality, M. Ferrand attached great importance. In the eyes of the vulgar, carelessness about comfort almost always passes for disinterestedness; dirt, for austerity. Comparing the vast financial luxury of some notaries, or the costly toilets of their wives, to the dull abode of M. Ferrand, so opposed to elegance, expense, or splendour, clients felt a sort of respect for, or rather blind confidence in, a man who, according to his large practice and the fortune attributed to him, could say, like many of his professional brethren, my carriage, my evening party, my

country-house, my box at the opera, etc. But, far from this, Jacques Ferrand lived with rigid economy; and thus deposits, investments, powers of attorney, in fact, all matters of trust and business requiring the most scrupulous and recognised integrity, accumulated in his hands.

Living thus meanly as he did, the notary lived in the way he liked. He detested the world, show, dearly purchased pleasures; and, even had it been otherwise, he would unhesitatingly have sacrificed his dearest inclinations to the appearances which he found it so profitable to assume.

A word or two on the character of the man. He was one of the children of the large family of misers. Misers are generally exhibited in a ridiculous and whimsical light; the worst do not go beyond egotism or harshness. The greater portion increase their fortune by continually investing; some (they are but few) lend at thirty per cent.; the most decided hardly venture any risk with their means; but it is almost an unheard-of thing for a miser to proceed to crime, even murder, in the acquisition of fresh wealth.

That is easily accounted for; avarice is especially a negative passion. The miser, in his incessant calculations, thinks more of becoming richer by not disbursing; in tightening around him, more and more, the limits of strict necessity, than he does of enriching himself at the cost of another; he is especially the martyr to preservation. Weak, timid, cunning, distrustful, and, above all, prudent and circumspect, never offensive, indifferent to the ills of his neighbour, — the miser at least never alludes to these ills, — he is, before all and above all, the man of certainty and surety; or, rather, he is only a miser because he believes only in the substantial, the hard gold which he has locked up in his chest. Speculations and loans, on even undoubted security, tempt him but little, for, how improbable soever it may be, they

always offer a chance of loss, and he prefers rather to lose the interest of his money than expose his capital. A man so timorous will, therefore, seldom have the savage energy of the wretch who risks the galleys or his neck to lay hands on the wealth of another.

Risk is a word erased from the vocabulary of the miser. It is in this sense that Jacques Ferrand was, let us say, a very singular exception, perhaps a new variety of the genus Miser; for Jacques Ferrand did risk, and a great deal. He relied on his craft, which was excessive; on his hypocrisy, which was unbounded; on his intellect, which was elastic and fertile; on his boldness, which was devilish, in assuring him impunity for his crimes, and they were already numerous.

Jacques Ferrand was a twofold exception. Usually these adventurous, energetic spirits, which do not recoil before any crime that will procure gold, are beset by turbulent passions — gaming, dissipation, gluttony, or other pleasures. Jacques Ferrand knew none of these violent and stormy desires; cunning and patient as a forger, cruel and resolute as an assassin, he was as sober and regular as Harpagon. One passion alone was active within him, and this we have seen too fatally exhibited in his early conduct to Louise. The loan of thirteen hundred francs to Morel at high interest was, in Ferrand's hands, a snare — a means of oppression and a source of profit. Sure of the lapidary's honesty, he was certain of being repaid in full some day or other. Still Louise's beauty must have made a deep impression on him to have made him lay out of a sum of money so advantageously placed.

Except this weakness, Jacques Ferrand loved gold only. He loved gold for gold's sake; not for the enjoyments it procured, — he was a stoic; not for the enjoyments it might procure, — he was not sufficiently poetical to enjoy speculatively, like some misers. With regard to what belonged to himself, he loved possession for posses-

sion's sake; with regard to what belonged to others, if it concerned a large deposit, for instance, liberally confided to his probity only, he experienced in returning this deposit the same agony, the same despair, as the goldsmith, Cardillac, did in separating himself from a casket of jewels which his own exquisite taste had fashioned into a *chef-d'œuvre* of art. With the notary, his character for extreme probity was his *chef-d'œuvre* of art; a deposit was to him a jewel, which he could not surrender but with poignant regrets. What care, what cunning, what stratagems, what skill, in a word, what art, did he use to attract this sum into his own strong box, still maintaining that extreme character for honour, which was beset with the most precious marks of confidence, like the pearls and diamonds in the golden diadems of Cardillac. The more this celebrated goldsmith approached perfection, they say, the more value did he attach to his ornaments, always considering the last as his *chef-d'œuvre*, and being utterly distressed at giving it up. The more Jacques Ferrand grew perfect in crime, the more he clung to the open and constant marks of confidence which were showered upon him, always considering his last deceit as his *chef-d'œuvre*.

We shall see in the sequel of this history that, by the aid of certain means really prodigious in plan and carrying out, he contrived to appropriate to himself, with impunity, several very considerable sums. His secret and mysterious life gave him incessant and terrible emotions, such as gaming gives to the gambler. Against all other men's fortunes Jacques Ferrand staked his hypocrisy, his boldness, his head; and he played on velvet, as it is called, far out of the reach of human justice, which he vulgarly and energetically characterised as a chimney which might fall on one's head; for him to lose was only not to gain; and, moreover, he was so criminally gifted that, in his bitter irony, he saw a continued gain in boundless esteem, the unlimited con-

fidence which he inspired, not only in a multitude of rich clients, but also in the smaller tradespeople and workmen of his district. A great many of these placed their money with him, saying, "He is not charitable, it is true; he is a devotee, and that's a pity; but he is much safer than the government or the savings-banks." In spite of his uncommon ability, this man had committed two of those mistakes from which the most skilful rogues do not always escape; forced by circumstances, it is true, he had associated with himself two accomplices. This immense fault, as he called it, had been in part repaired; neither of his two associates could destroy him without destroying themselves, and neither would have reaped from denunciation any other profit but of drawing down justice on themselves as well as on the notary; on this score he was quite easy. Besides, he was not at the end of his crimes, and the disadvantages of accompliceship were balanced by the criminal aid which at times he still obtained.

A few words as to the personal appearance of M. Ferrand, and we will introduce the reader into the notary's study, where we shall encounter some of the principal personages in this recital.

M. Ferrand was fifty years of age, but did not appear forty; he was of middle height, with broad and stooping shoulders, powerful, thickset, strong-limbed, red-haired, and naturally as hirsute as a bear. His hair was flat on his temples, his forehead bald, his eyebrows scarcely perceptible; his bilious complexion was almost concealed by innumerable red spots, and, when strong emotion agitated him, his yellow and murky countenance was injected with blood, and became a livid red. His face was as flat as a death's head, as is vulgarly said; his nose thick and flat; his lips so thin, so imperceptible, that his mouth seemed incised in his face, and, when he smiled with his villainous and revolting air, his teeth seemed as though supplied by black and rotten fangs.

His pallid face had an expression at once austere and devout, impassible and inflexible, cold and reflective; whilst his small, black, animated, peering, and restless eyes were lost behind large green spectacles.

Jacques Ferrand saw admirably well; but, sheltered by his glasses, he had an immense advantage; he could observe without being observed; and well he knew how often a glance is unwittingly full of meaning. In spite of his imperturbable audacity, he had met twice or thrice in his life certain potent and magnetic looks, before which his own had compulsorily been lowered; and in some important circumstances it is fatal to lower the eyes before the man who interrogates, accuses, or judges you. The large spectacles of M. Ferrand were thus a kind of covert retrenchment, whence he could reconnoitre and observe every movement of the enemy; and all the world was the notary's enemy, because all the world was, more or less, his dupe; and accusers are but enlightened or disgusted dupes. He affected a negligence in his dress almost amounting to dirtiness, or rather, he was naturally so; his chin shaven only every two or three days, his grimy and wrinkled head, his broad nails encircled in black, his unpleasant odour, his threadbare coat, his greasy hat, his coarse neckcloth, his black-worsted stockings, his clumsy shoes, all curiously betokened his worthiness with his clients, by giving him an air of disregard of the world, and an air of practical philosophy, which delighted them.

They said: "What tastes, what passions, what feelings, what weaknesses, must the notary sacrifice to obtain the confidence he inspires! He gains, perhaps, sixty thousand francs (2,400*l*) a year, and his household consists of a servant and an old housekeeper. His only pleasure is to go on Sundays to mass and vespers, and he knows no opera comparable to the grave chanting of the organ, no worldly society which is worth an evening quietly passed at his fireside corner with the curé of the

parish after a frugal dinner; in fine, he places his enjoyment in probity, his pride in honour, his happiness in religion."

Such was the opinion of the contemporaries of M. Jacques Ferrand.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OFFICE.

The office of M. Ferrand resembled all other offices, and his clerks all other clerks. It was approached through an antechamber, furnished with four old chairs. In the office, properly so-called, surrounded by rows of shelves, ornamented with pasteboard boxes, containing the papers of the clients of M. Ferrand, five young men, stooping over black wooden desks, were laughing, gossiping, or scribbling perpetually. A waiting-room, also filled with pasteboard boxes, and in which the chief clerk was constantly stationed, and another room, which, for greater secrecy, was kept unoccupied, between the notary's private room and the waiting-room, completed the total of this laboratory of deeds of every description.

An old cuckoo-clock, placed between the two windows of the office, had just struck two o'clock, and a certain bustle prevailed amongst the clerks; a part of their conversation will inform the reader as to the cause of this excitement.

"Well, if any one had told me that François Germain was a thief," said one of the young men, "I should have said, 'That's a lie!'"

"So should I."

"And I."

"And I. It really quite affected me to see him arrested and led away by the police. I could not eat any breakfast; but I have been rewarded by not having to eat the

daily mess doled out by Mother Séraphin, for, as the song goes:

> 'To eat the allowance of old Séraphin,
> One must have a twist indeed.'"

"Capital! why, Chalamel, you are beginning your poetry already."

"I demand Chalamel's head!"

"Folly apart, it is very terrible for poor Germain."

"Seventeen thousand francs (680*l.*) is a lump of money!"

"I believe you!"

"And yet, for the fifteen months that Germain has been cashier, he was never a farthing deficient in making up his books."

"I think the governor was wrong to arrest Germain, for the poor fellow swore that he had only taken thirteen hundred francs (52*l.*) in gold, and that, moreover, he brought back the thirteen hundred francs this morning, to return them to the money-chest, at the very moment when our master sent for the police."

"Ah, that's the bore of people of such ferocious honesty as our governor, they have no pity!"

"But they ought to think twice before they ruin a poor young fellow, who, up to this time, has behaved with strict honesty."

"M. Ferrand said he did it for an example."

"Example? What? It is none to the honest, and the dishonest know well enough what they expose themselves to if they are found out in any delinquencies."

"Our house seems to produce lots of jobs for the police officers."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, this morning there was poor little Louise, and now poor Germain."

"I confess that Germain's affair was not quite clear to me."

"But he confessed?"

"He confessed that he had taken thirteen hundred francs, certainly; but he declared most vehemently that he had not taken the other fifteen thousand francs in bank-notes, and the other seven hundred francs which are short in the strong box."

"True; and, if he confessed one thing, why shouldn't he confess another?"

"Exactly so; for a man is as much punished for five hundred francs as he is for fifteen thousand francs."

"Yes; only they retain the fifteen thousand francs, and, when they leave prison, this forms a little fund to start upon; and, as the swan of Cambrai sings:

'To get a jolly lot of "swag"
A cove must dip deep in the lucky-bag.'"

"I demand Chalamel's head!"

"Can't you talk sense for five minutes?"

"Ah, here's Jabulot! won't he be astonished?"

"What at, my boys? what at? Anything fresh about poor Louise?"

"You would have known, roving blade, if you had not been so long in your rounds."

"What, you think it is but a step from here to the Rue de Chaillot?"

"I never said so."

"Well, what about that gallant don, the famous Viscount de Saint-Rémy?"

"Has he not been here yet?"

"No."

"Well, his horses were harnessed, and he sent me word by his *valet de chambre*, that he would come here directly. But he didn't seem best pleased, the servant said. Oh, my boys! such a lovely little house, furnished most magnificently, like one of the dwellings of the olden time that Faublas writes about. Oh, Faublas! he

is my hero — my model!" said the clerk, putting down his umbrella and taking off his clogs.

"You are right, Jabulot; for, as that sublime old blind man, Homer, said:

> 'Faublas, that amorous hero, it is said,
> Forsook the duchess for the waiting-maid.'"

"Yes; but then, she was a theatrical 'waiting-maid,' my lads."

"I demand Chalamel's head!"

"But about this Viscount de Saint-Rémy? Jabulot says his mansion is superb."

"Pyramidic!"

"Then, I'll be bound, he has debts not a few, and arrests to match, this viscount."

"A bill of thirty-four thousand francs (1,360*l.*) has been sent here by the officer. It is made payable at the office. This is his creditors' doing; I don't know why or wherefore."

"Well, I should say that this dandy viscount would pay now, because he came from the country last night, where he has been concealed these three days, in order to escape from the bailiffs."

"How is it, then, that they have not seized the furniture already?"

"Why? oh, he's too cunning! The house is not his own; all the furniture is in the name of his *valet de chambre*, who is said to let it to him furnished; and, in the same way, his horses and carriages are in his coachman's name, who declares that he lets to the viscount his splendid turn-out at so much a month. Ah, he's a 'downy' one, is M. de Saint-Rémy! But what were you going to tell me? what has happened here fresh?"

"Why, imagine the governor coming in here two hours ago in a most awful passion. 'Germain is not here?' he exclaimed. 'No, sir.' 'Well, the rascal has robbed

me last night of seventeen thousand francs!' says the governor."

"Germain — rob — ah, come, that's 'no go!'"

"You will hear. 'What, sir, are you sure? but it cannot be,' we all cried out. 'I tell you, gentlemen,' said the governor, 'that yesterday I put in the drawer of the bureau at which he writes, fifteen notes of one thousand francs each, and two thousand francs in gold, in a little box, and it is all gone.' At this moment old Marriton, the porter, came in, and he said, 'Sir, the police are coming; where is Germain?' 'Wait a bit,' said the governor to the porter; 'as soon as M. Germain returns, send him into the office, without saying a word. I will confront him before you all, gentlemen,' said the governor. At the end of a quarter of an hour in comes poor Germain, as if nothing had happened. Old Mother Séraphin had brought in our morning mess. Germain made his bow to the governor, and wished us all 'good morning,' as usual. 'Germain, don't you take your breakfast?' inquired M. Ferrand. 'No, thank you, sir, I am not hungry.' 'You're very late this morning.' 'Yes, sir; I was obliged to go to Belleville this morning.' 'No doubt to hide the money you have stolen from me!' M. Ferrand said, in a terrible voice."

"And Germain?"

"The poor fellow turned as pale as death, and stammered out, 'Pray — pray, sir, do not ruin me — '"

"What! he had stolen —"

"Listen, Jabulot: 'Do not ruin me,' says he to the governor. 'What! you confess it, then, you villain?' 'Yes, sir; but here is the money; I thought I could replace it before you came into the office this morning; but, unfortunately, a person who had a small sum of mine, and whom I expected to find at home last night, had been at Belleville these two days, and I was compelled to go there this morning; that made me late. Pray, sir, forgive me, — do not destroy me! When I

took the money I knew I could return it this morning; and here are the thirteen hundred francs in gold.' 'What do you mean by thirteen hundred francs?' exclaimed M. Ferrand; 'what's the use of talking of thirteen hundred francs? You have stolen, from the bureau in my room, fifteen thousand francs that were in a green pocket-book, and two thousand francs in gold.' 'I? Never!' cried poor Germain, quite aghast. 'I took thirteen hundred francs in gold, but not a farthing more. I did not even see the pocket-book in the drawer; there were only two thousand francs, in gold, in a box.' 'Oh, shameless liar!' cried the governor; 'you confess to having plundered thirteen hundred francs, and may just as well have stolen more; that will be for the law to decide. I shall be without mercy for such an infamous breach of trust; you shall be an example.' In fact, my dear Jabulot, the police came in at that moment, with the commissary's chief clerk, to draw up the depositions, and they laid hands on poor Germain; and that's all about it."

"Really, you do surprise me! I feel as if some one had given me a thump on the head. Germain — Germain, who seemed such an honest fellow, — a chap to whom one would have given absolution without confession."

"I should say that he had some presentiment of his misfortune."

"How?"

"For some days past he seemed to have something on his mind."

"Perhaps about Louise."

"Louise?"

"Why, I only repeat what Mother Séraphin said this morning."

"What did she say?"

"What? that he was Louise's lover, and the father of her child."

"Sly dog! Do you think so?"

"Why — why — why —"

"Pooh! pooh!"

"That's not the case."

"How do you know, Master Jabulot?"

"Because it is not a fortnight ago that Germain told me, in confidence, that he was over head and ears in love with a little needle-woman, a very correct lass, whom he had known in the house where he lived; and, when he talked of her, the tears came in his eyes."

"Why, Jabulot, you are getting quite poetical."

"He says Faublas is his hero, and he is not 'wide awake' enough to know that a man may be in love with one woman and a lover of another at the same time; for, as the tender Fénélon says, in his Instructions to the Duke of Burgundy':

> A spicy blade, of the right cock-feather,
> May love a blonde and brunette together.'"

"I demand Chalamel's head!"

"I tell you that Germain spoke in earnest."

At this moment the head clerk entered the office.

"Well, M. Jabulot," said he, "have you completed your rounds?"

"Yes, M. Dubois; I have been to M. de Saint-Remy, and he will come and pay immediately."

"And as to the Countess Macgregor?"

"Here is her answer."

"And the Countess d'Orbigny?"

"She returns her compliments to our employer. She only arrived from Normandy yesterday morning, and did not know that her reply was required so soon; here is a note from her. I also called on the Marquis d'Harville's steward, as he desired me to receive the money for drawing up the contract which I witnessed at their house the other day."

"You should have told him there was no hurry."

"I did, but the steward insisted on paying. Here is the money. Oh! I had almost forgotten to say, M. Badinot said that M. Ferrand had better do as they had agreed; it was the best thing to do."

"He did not write an answer?"

"No, sir; he said he had not time."

"Very well."

"M. Charles Robert will come in the course of the morning to speak to our master. It seems that he fought a duel yesterday with the Duke de Lucenay."

"And is he wounded?"

"I think not, or else they would have told me so at the house."

"Hark! there's a carriage stopping at the door."

"Oh, what fine horses! how full of spirits they are!"

"And that fat English coachman, with his white wig, and brown livery striped with silver, and his epaulettes like a colonel!"

"It must be some ambassador's."

"And the *chasseur*, look how he is bedizened all over with silver!"

"And what moustachios!"

"Oh," said Jabulot, "it is the Viscount de Saint-Remy's carriage!"

"What! is that the way he does it? Oh, my!"

Soon after the Viscount de Saint-Remy entered the office.

We have already described the handsome appearance, elegance of style, and aristocratical demeanour of M. de Saint-Remy, when he was on his way to the farm of Arnouville (the estate of Madame de Lucenay), where he had found a retreat from the pursuit of the bailiffs, Malicorne and Bourdin. The viscount, who entered unceremoniously into the office, with his hat on his head, a haughty and disdainful look, and his eyes half

closed, asked, with an air of extreme superciliousness, and without looking at anybody:

"Where is the notary?"

"M. Ferrand is engaged in his private room," said the chief clerk. "If you will please to wait a moment, sir, he will see you."

"What do you mean by wait a moment?"

"Why, sir —"

"There is no why in the case, sir. Go and tell him that M. de Saint-Remy is here; and I am much surprised that this notary should make me dance attendance in his waiting-room. It is really most annoying."

"Will you walk into this side room, sir?" said the chief clerk, "and I will inform M. Ferrand this instant."

M. de Saint-Remy shrugged his shoulders, and followed the head clerk. At the end of a quarter of an hour, which seemed very tedious to him, and which converted his spleen into anger, the viscount was introduced into the notary's private apartment.

Nothing could be more striking than the contrast between these two men, both of them profound physiognomists, and habituated to judge at a glance of the persons with whom they had business. M. de Saint-Remy saw Jacques Ferrand for the first time, and was struck with the expression of his pallid, harsh, and impassive features, — the look concealed by the large green spectacles; the skull half hid beneath an old black silk cap. The notary was seated at his writing-desk, in a leathern armchair, beside a low fireplace, almost choked up with ashes, and in which were two black and smoking logs of wood. Curtains of green cotton, almost in rags, hung on small iron rings at the windows, and, concealing the lower window-panes, threw over the room, which was naturally dark, a livid and unpleasant hue. Shelves of black wood were filled with deed-boxes, all duly labelled. Some cherry-wood chairs, covered with threadbare Utrecht velvet; a clock in a mahogany case; a floor yellow, damp,

and chilling; a ceiling full of cracks, and festooned with spiders' webs, — such was the *sanctum sanctorum* of M. Jacques Ferrand. Hardly had the viscount made two steps into his cabinet, or spoken a word, than the notary, who knew him by reputation, conceived an intense antipathy towards him. In the first place, he saw in him, if we may say so, a rival in rogueries; and then he hated elegance, grace, and youth in other persons, and more especially when these advantages were attended with an air of insolent superiority. The notary usually assumed a tone of rude and almost coarse abruptness with his clients, who liked him the better for being in behaviour like a boor of the Danube. He made up his mind to double this brutality towards M. de Saint-Remy, who, only knowing the notary by report also, expected to find an attorney either familiar or a fool; for the viscount always imagined men of such probity as M. Ferrand had the reputation for, as having an exterior almost ridiculous, but, so far from this, the countenance and appearance of the attorney at law struck the viscount with an undefinable feeling, — half fear, half aversion. Consequently, his own resolute character made M. de Saint-Remy increase his usual impertinence and effrontery. The notary kept his cap on his head, and the viscount did not doff his hat, but exclaimed, as he entered the room, with a loud and imperative tone:

"*Pardieu*, sir! it is very strange that you should give me the trouble to come here, instead of sending to my house for the money for the bills I accepted from the man Badinot, and for which the fellow has issued execution against me. It is true you tell me that you have also another very important communication to make to me; but then, surely, that is no excuse for making me wait for half an hour in your antechamber: it is really most annoying, sir!"

M. Ferrand, quite unmoved, finished a calculation he was engaged in, wiped his pen methodically in a moist

sponge which encircled his inkstand of cracked earthenware, and raised towards the viscount his icy, earthy, flat face, shaded by his spectacles. He looked like a death's head in which the eye-holes had been replaced by large, fixed, staring green eyeballs. After having looked at the viscount for a moment or two, the notary said to him, in a harsh and abrupt tone :

" Where's the money ? "

This coolness exasperated M. de Saint-Rémy.

He — he, the idol of the women, the envy of the men, the model of the first society in Paris, the dreaded duellist — produced no effect on a wretched attorney-at-law ! It was horrid ; and, although he was only *tête-à-tête* with Jacques Ferrand, his pride revolted.

" Where are the bills ? " inquired the viscount, abruptly.

With the point of one of his fingers, as hard as iron, and covered with red hair, the notary rapped on a large leathern pocket-book which lay close beside him. Resolved on being as laconic, although trembling with rage, M. de Saint-Remy took from the pocket of his upper coat a Russian leather pocket-book, with gold clasps, from which he drew forth forty notes of a thousand francs each, and showed them to the notary.

" How many are there ? " he inquired.

" Forty thousand francs."

" Hand them to me ! '

" Take them ! and let this have a speedy termination. Ply your trade, pay yourself, and give me the bills," said the viscount, as he threw the notes on the table, with an impatient air.

The notary took up the bank-notes, rose, went close to the window to examine them, turning and re-turning them over and over, one by one, with an attention so scrupulous, and really so insulting for M. de Saint-Rémy, that the viscount actually turned pale with rage. Jacques Ferrand, as if he had guessed the thoughts which were passing in the viscount's mind, shook his head, turned

half towards him, and said to him, with an indefinable accent:

"I have seen — "

M. de Saint-Remy, confused for a moment, said, drily:

"What?"

"Forged bank-notes," replied the notary, continuing his scrutiny of a note, which he had not yet examined.

"What do you mean by that remark, sir?"

Jacques Ferrand paused for a moment, looked steadfastly at the viscount through his glasses, then, shrugging his shoulders slightly, he continued to investigate the notes, without uttering a syllable.

"Monsieur Notary! I would wish you to learn that, when I ask a question, I have an answer!" cried M. de Saint-Remy, exasperated at the coolness of Jacques Ferrand.

"These notes are good," said the notary, turning towards his bureau, whence he took a small bundle of stamped papers, to which were annexed two bills of exchange; then, putting down one of the bank-notes for one thousand francs and three rouleaus, of one hundred francs each, on the table, he said to M. de Saint-Remy, pointing to the money and the bills with his finger:

"Here's your change out of the forty thousand francs; my client has desired me to deduct the expenses."

The viscount had contained himself with great difficulty whilst Jacques Ferrand was making out the account, and, instead of taking up the money, he exclaimed, in a voice that literally shook with passion:

"I beg to know, sir, what you meant by saying, whilst you looked at the bank-notes which I handed to you, that you 'had seen forged notes?'"

"What I meant?"

"Yes."

"Because I sent for you to come here on a matter of forgery."

And the notary fixed his green spectacles on the viscount.

"And how can this forgery in any way affect me?"

After a moment's silence, M. Ferrand said to the viscount, with a stern air:

"Are you aware, sir, of the duties which a notary fulfils?"

"Those duties appear to me, sir, very simple indeed; just now I had forty thousand francs, now I have thirteen hundred francs left."

"You are facetious, sir; I will tell you that a notary is, in temporal matters, what a confessor is in spiritual affairs; by virtue of his position, he often becomes possessed of disgraceful secrets."

"Go on, I beg, sir."

"He is often brought into contact with rogues."

"Go on, sir."

"He ought, as well as he can, to prevent an honourable name from being dragged through the mud."

"What is all this to me?"

"Your father's name is deservedly respected; you, sir, dishonour it."

"How dare you, sir, to address such language to me?"

"But for the interest which the gentleman, of whom I speak, inspires in the minds of all honest men, instead of being summoned before me, you would, at this moment, be standing before a police-magistrate."

"I do not understand you."

"Two months since, you discounted, through an agent, a bill for fifty-eight thousand francs (2,320*l.*), accepted by the house of Meulaert & Company, of Hamburg, in favour of a certain William Smith, payable in three months, at the bank of M. Grimaldi, of Paris."

"Well?"

"That bill was a forgery."

"Impossible!"

"That bill was a forgery! the firm of Meulaert never gave such a bill to William Smith, and never had such a transaction with such an individual."

"Can this be true?" exclaimed M. de Saint-Rémy, with equal surprise and indignation; "then I have been most infamously deceived, sir, for I took the bill as ready money."

"From whom?"

"From M. William Smith himself; the house of Meulaert is so well known, and I was so firmly convinced myself of the honour of M. William Smith, that I took the bill in payment of a debt he owed me."

"William Smith never existed, — he is an imaginary personage."

"Sir, you insult me!"

"His signature is forged and false, as well as all the rest of the bill."

"I assert that M. William Smith is alive; but I must have been the dupe of a horrible abuse of confidence."

"Poor young man!"

"Explain yourself, sir."

"The actual holder of the bill is convinced you committed the forgery."

"Sir!"

"He declares that he has proof of this; and he came to me the day before yesterday, requesting me to see you, and offer to give up this forged document, under certain conditions. Up to this point all was straightforward, but what follows is not so, and I only speak to you now according to my instructions. He requires one hundred thousand francs (4,000*l.*) down this very day, or else to-morrow, at twelve o'clock at noon, the forged bill will be handed over to the king's attorney-general."

"This is infamous, sir!"

"It is more, — it is absurd. You are a ruined man; you were all but arrested for the sum which you have just paid me, and which you have scraped up I cannot

tell from where; and this I have told to the holder of the bill, who replied, that a certain great and very rich lady would not allow you to remain in this embarrassment."

"Enough, sir! enough!"

"More infamous! more absurd! agreed."

"Well, sir, and what is required of me?"

"Why, to work out infamously an action infamously commenced. I have consented to communicate this proposition to you, although it disgusts me, as an honest man ought to feel disgust on such an occasion; but now it is your affair. If you are guilty, choose between a criminal court and the means of ransom offered to you; my duty is only an official one, and I will not dirty my fingers any further in so foul a transaction. The third party is called M. Petit-Jean, an oil merchant, who lives on the banks of the Seine, Quai de Billy, No. 10. Make your arrangements with him; you are fit to meet if you are a forger, as he declares."

M. de Saint-Remy had entered Jacques Ferrand's study with a lip all scorn, and a head all pride. Although he had in his life committed some shameful actions, he still retained a certain elevation of race, and an instinctive courage, which had never forsaken him. At the beginning of this conversation, considering the notary as an adversary beneath him, he had been content to treat him with disdain; but, when Jacques Ferrand began to talk of forgery, he felt annihilated; in his turn he felt himself rode over by the notary. But for the entire command of self which he possessed, he could not have concealed the terrible impression which this unexpected revelation disclosed to him, for it might have incalculable consequences to him, — consequences unsuspected by the notary himself. After a moment of silence and reflection, he resigned himself, — he, so haughty, so irritable, so vain of his self-possession! — to beg of this coarse man, who had

so roughly addressed to him the stern language of probity:

"Sir, you give me a proof of your interest, for which I thank you, and I regret that any hasty expressions should have escaped me," said M. de Saint-Remy, with a tone of cordiality.

"I do not take the slightest interest in or for you," replied the notary, brutally. "Your father is the soul of honour, and I would not wish that in the depth of that solitude in which he lives, as they tell me, at Angers, he should learn that his name has been exposed, tarnished, degraded, in a court of justice, that's all."

"I repeat to you, sir, that I am incapable of the infamy which is attributed to me."

"You may tell that to M. Petit-Jean."

"But I confess that, in the absence of M. Smith, who has so unworthily abused my confidence, that —"

"The scoundrel Smith!"

"The absence of M. Smith places me in a cruel embarrassment. I am innocent, — let them accuse me, I will prove myself guiltless; but such an accusation, even, must always disgrace a gentleman."

"Well?"

"Be so good as to use the sum I have just handed to you in part payment to the person who holds the acceptance."

"That money belongs to a client and is sacred."

"In two or three days I will repay you."

"You will not be able."

"I have resources."

"You have none; not visible at least. Your household furniture, your horses, do not belong to you, as you declare; this has to me the appearance of a disgraceful fraud."

"You are severe, sir; but, admitting what you say, do you not suppose that I shall turn everything into money in such a desperate extremity? Only, as it will be

impossible for me to procure, between this and noon to-morrow, the one hundred thousand francs, I entreat you to employ the money I have just handed to you in procuring this unfortunate bill, or, at least, as you are very rich, advance the money. Do not leave me in such a position."

"Me? Why, is the man mad?"

"Sir, I beseech you, in my father's name, which you have mentioned to me, be so kind as to —"

"I am kind to those who deserve it," said the notary, harshly. "An honest man myself, I hate swindlers, and should not be sorry to see one of those high-minded gentlemen, without faith or honour, impious and reprobate, put in the pillory, as an example to others; but I hear your horses, who are impatient to depart, M. le Vicomte," said the notary, with a smile that displayed his black fangs.

At this moment some one knocked at the door of the apartment.

"Who's there?" inquired Jacques Ferrand.

"Madame the Countess d'Orbigny," said the chief clerk.

"Request her to wait a moment."

"The stepmother of the Marchioness d'Harville?" exclaimed M. de Saint-Remy.

"Yes, sir; she has an appointment with me, — so, your servant, sir."

"Not a word of this, sir!" cried M. de Saint-Remy, in a menacing voice.

"I told you, sir, that a notary is as discreet as a confessor."

Jacques Ferrand rang, and the clerk appeared.

"Show Madame d'Orbigny in." Then, addressing the viscount, "Take these thirteen hundred francs, sir; they will be something towards an arrangement with M. Petit-Jean."

Madame d'Orbigny (formerly Madame Roland) en-

tered at the moment when M. de Saint-Remy went out, his features convulsed with rage at having so uselessly humiliated himself before the notary.

"Ah, good day, M. de Saint-Remy," said Madame d'Orbigny; "what a time it is since I saw you!"

"Why, madame, since D'Harville's marriage, at which I was present, I do not think I have had the pleasure of meeting you," said M. de Saint-Remy, bowing, and assuming an affable and smiling demeanour. "You have remained in Normandy ever since, I think?"

"Why, yes! M. d'Orbigny will only live in the country, and what he likes I like; so you see in me a complete country wife. I have not been in Paris since the marriage of my dear stepdaughter with that excellent M. d'Harville. Do you see him frequently?"

"D'Harville has grown very sullen and morose; he is seldom seen in the world," said M. de Saint-Remy, with something like impatience, for the conversation was most irksome to him, both because of its untimeliness and that the notary seemed amused at it; but Madame d'Harville's stepmother, enchanted at thus meeting with a dandy of the first water, was not the woman to allow her prey to escape her so easily.

"And my dear stepdaughter," she continued, — "she, I hope, is not as morose as her husband?"

"Madame d'Harville is all the fashion, and has the world at her feet, as a lovely woman should have. But I take up your time, and —"

"Not at all, I assure you. It is quite agreeable to me to meet the 'observed of all observers,' — the monarch of fashion, — for, in ten minutes, I shall be as *au fait* of Paris as if I had never left it. And your dear M. de Lucenay, who was also present at M. d'Harville's marriage?"

"A still greater oddity. He has been travelling in the East, and returned in time to receive a sword-wound yesterday, — nothing serious, though."

"Poor dear duke! And his wife, always lovely and fascinating?"

"Madame, I have the honour to be one of her profoundest admirers, and my testimony would, therefore, be received with suspicion. I beg, on your return to Aubiers, you will not forget my regards to M. d'Orbigny."

"He will, I am sure, be most sensible of your kindness; he often talks of you, and says you remind him of the Duke de Lauzun."

"His comparison is a eulogy in itself, but, unfortunately, infinitely more flattering than true. Adieu, madame, for I fear I must not ask to be allowed to pay my respects to you before your departure."

"I should lament to give you the trouble of calling on me, for I have pitched my tent for a few days in a furnished hôtel; but if, in the summer or autumn, you should be passing our way, *en route* to some of those fashionable châteaus where the leaders of *ton* dispute the pleasure of receiving you, pray give us a few days of your society, if it be only by way of contrast, and to rest yourself with us poor rustic folk from the whirl of your high life of fashion and distinction; for where you are it is always delightful to be."

"Madame!"

"I need not say how delighted M. d'Orbigny and myself would be to receive you; but adieu, sir, I fear the kind attorney (she pointed to Ferrand) will grow impatient at our gossip."

"Quite the reverse, madame, quite the reverse," said Ferrand, with an emphasis that redoubled the repressed rage of M. de Saint-Remy.

"Is not M. Ferrand a terrible man?" said Madame d'Orbigny, affectedly. "Mind now, I tell you, that, if he has charge of your affairs, he will scold you awfully. He is the most unpitying man — But that's my nonsense; on the contrary, why, such an exquisite as you to have M. Ferrand for his solicitor is a proof of reforma-

tion, for we know very well that he never allows his clients to do foolish things; if they do, he gives up their business. Oh, he will not be everybody's lawyer!" Then, turning to Jacques Ferrand: "Do you know, most puritanical solicitor, that you have made a splendid conversion there? If you reform the exquisite of exquisites, the King of the Mode —"

"It is really a conversion, madame. The viscount left my study a very different man from what he entered it."

"There, I tell you that you perform miracles!"

"Ah, madame, you flatter me," said Jacques Ferrand, with emphasis.

M. de Saint-Remy made a low bow to Madame d'Orbigny, and then, as he left the notary, desirous of trying once more to excite his pity, he said to him, in a careless tone, which, however, betrayed deep anxiety:

"Then, my dear M. Ferrand, you will not grant me the favour I ask?"

"Some wild scheme, no doubt. Be inexorable, my dear Puritan," cried Madame d'Orbigny, laughing.

"You hear, sir? I must not contradict such a handsome lady."

"My dear M. Ferrand, let us speak seriously of serious things, and, you know, this is a most serious matter. Do you really refuse me?" inquired the viscount, with an anxiety which he could not altogether dissemble.

The notary was cruel enough to appear to hesitate; M. de Saint-Remy had an instant's hope.

"What, man of iron, do you yield?" said Madame d'Harville's stepmother, laughing still. "Do you, too, yield to the charm of the irresistible?"

"*Ma foi*, madame! I was on the point of yielding, as you say; but you make me blush for my weakness," added M. Ferrand. And then, addressing himself to the viscount, he said to him, with an accent of which Saint-Remy felt all the meaning, "Well then, seriously," (and he dwelt on the word), "it is impossible."

"Ah, the Puritan! Hark to the Puritan!" said Madame d'Orbigny.

"See M. Petit-Jean. He will think precisely as I do, I am sure, and, like me, will say to you 'No!'"

M. de Saint-Remy rushed out in despair.

After a moment's reflection he said to himself, "It must be so!" Then he added, addressing his chasseur, who was standing with the door of his carriage opened, "To the Hôtel de Lucenay."

Whilst M. de Saint-Remy is on his way to see the duchess, we will present the reader at the interview between M. Ferrand and the stepmother of Madame d'Harville.

CHAPTER V.

THE CLIENTS.

The reader may have forgotten the portrait of the stepmother of Madame d'Harville as drawn by the latter. Let us then repeat, that Madame d'Orbigny was a slight, fair, delicate woman, with eyelashes almost white, round and palish blue eyes, with a soft voice, a hypocritical air, insidious and insinuating manners. Any one who studied her treacherous and perfidious countenance would detect therein craft and cruelty.

"What a delightful young man M. de Saint-Remy is!" said Madame d'Orbigny to Jacques Ferrand, when the viscount had left them.

"Delightful! But, madame, let us now proceed to our business. You wrote to me from Normandy that you desired to consult me upon most serious matters."

"Have you not always been my adviser ever since the worthy Doctor Polidori introduced me to you? By the way, have you heard from him recently?" inquired Madame d'Orbigny, with an air of complete carelessness.

"Since he left Paris he has not written me a single line," replied the notary, with an air of similar indifference.

Let the reader understand that these two persons lied most unequivocally to each other. The notary had seen Polidori (one of his two accomplices) recently, and had proposed to him to go to Asnières, to the Martials, the fresh-water pirates, of whom we shall presently speak, — had proposed to him, we say, to poison Louise Morel,

under the name of Doctor Vincent. Madame d'Harville's stepmother, on her side, had come to Paris in order to have a secret meeting with this scoundrel, who had been for a long time concealed, as we have said, under the name of César Bradamanti.

"But it is not the good doctor of whom we have to discourse," continued Madame d'Harville's stepmother. "You see me very uneasy. My husband is indisposed; his health becomes weaker and weaker every day. Without experiencing serious alarm, his condition gives me much concern, — or rather, gives him much concern," said Madame d'Orbigny, drying her eyes, which were slightly moistened.

"What is the business, madame?"

"He is constantly talking of making his last arrangements, — of his will." Here Madame d'Orbigny concealed her face in her pocket-handkerchief for some minutes.

"It is very afflicting, no doubt," said the notary; "but the precaution has nothing terrible in itself. And what may be M. d'Orbigny's intentions, madame?"

"Dear sir! How do I know? You may suppose that when he commences the subject I do not allow him to dwell on it long."

"Well, then, he has not up to this time told you anything positive?"

"I think," replied Madame d'Orbigny, with a deep sigh, — "I think that he wishes to leave me not only all that the law will allow him to bequeath to me, but — But, really, I pray of you, do not let us talk of that."

"Of what, then, shall we talk?"

"Alas, you are right, pitiless man! I must, in spite of myself, return to the sad subject that brings me here to see you. Well, then, M. d'Orbigny's inclination extends so far that he desires to sell a part of his estate and present me with a large sum."

"But his daughter — his daughter?" exclaimed M.

Ferrand, harshly. "I must tell you that, during the last year, M. d'Harville has placed his affairs in my hands, and I have lately purchased a splendid estate for him. You know my blunt way of doing business? Whether M. d'Harville is my client or not is no matter. I stand up only for justice. If your husband makes up his mind to behave to his daughter in a way that I do not approve, I tell you plainly he must not reckon on my assistance. Upright and downright, such has always been my line of conduct."

"And mine, also! Therefore it is that I am always saying to my husband what you now say to me, 'Your daughter has behaved very ill to you, that is but too true; but that is no reason why you should disinherit her.'"

"Very good, — quite right! And what answer does he make to that?"

"He replies, 'I shall leave my daughter twenty-five thousand livres of annual income (1,000*l.*); she had more than a million (40,000*l.*) from her mother. Her husband has an enormous fortune of his own; and, therefore, why should I not leave you the residue of my fortune, — you, my tender love, the sole support, the only comfort of my declining years, my guardian angel?' I repeat these very flattering words to you," said Madame d'Orbigny, with an air of modesty, "to prove to you how kind M. d'Orbigny is to me. But, in spite of that, I have always refused his offers; and, as he perceives that, he has compelled me to come and seek you."

"But I do not know M. d'Orbigny."

"But he, like all the world, knows your high character."

"But why should he send you to me?"

"To put an end to all my scruples and refusals, he said to me, 'I will not ask you to consult my notary, because you will think him too much devoted to my

service; but I will trust myself entirely to the decision of a man of whose extreme probity of character I have heard you so frequently speak in praise,—M. Jacques Ferrand. If he considers your delicacy compromised by your consent to my wishes, we will not say another word on the subject; otherwise, you must comply without a word.' 'I consent!' I replied to M. d'Orbigny. And so now you are the arbitrator between us. 'If M. Ferrand approves,' added my husband, 'I will send him ample power to realise in my name my rents and investments, and he shall keep the proceeds in his hands as a deposit; and thus, after my decease, my tender love, you will at least have an existence worthy of you.'"

Perhaps M. Ferrand never had greater need of his spectacles than at this moment; for, had he not worn them, Madame d'Orbigny would doubtless have been struck with the sparkle of the notary's eyes, which seemed to dart fire when the word deposit was pronounced. However, he replied, in his usual coarse way:

"It is very tiresome. This is the tenth or twelfth time that I have been made the arbitrator in a similar matter, always under the pretence of my honesty,—that is the only word in people's mouths. My honesty!—my honesty! What a fine quality, forsooth!—which only brings me in a great deal of tiresome trouble."

"My good M. Ferrand! Come, do not repulse me. You will write at once to M. d'Orbigny, who only awaits your letter to send you full powers to act for him, and to realise the sum required."

"Which amounts to how much?"

"Why, I think he said four or five hundred thousand francs" (16,000*l.* or 20,000*l.*).

"The sum, after all, is not so much as I thought. You are devoted to M. d'Orbigny. His daughter is very rich; you have nothing. That is not just; and I really think you should accept it."

"Really, do you think so, indeed?" said Madame d'Orbigny, who was the dupe, like the rest of the world, of the proverbial probity of the notary, and who had not been enlightened by Polidori in this particular.

"You may accept," he repeated.

"I will accept, then," said Madame d'Orbigny, with a sigh.

The chief clerk knocked at the door.

"Who is there?" inquired M. Ferrand.

"Madame the Countess Macgregor."

"Request her to wait a moment."

"I will go, then, my dear M. Ferrand," said Madame d'Orbigny. "You will write to my husband, since he wishes it, and he will send you the requisite authority by return of post?"

"I will write."

"Adieu, my worthy and excellent counsellor!"

"Ah, you do not know, you people of the world, how disagreeable it is to take charge of such deposits, — the responsibility which we then assume. I tell you that there is nothing more detestable in the world than this fine character for probity, which brings down upon one all these turmoils and troubles."

"And the admiration of all good people."

"Thank Heaven, I place otherwise than here below the hopes of the reward at which I aim!" said M. Ferrand, in a hypocritical tone.

To Madame d'Orbigny succeeded Sarah Macgregor.

Sarah entered the cabinet of the notary with her usual coolness and assurance. Jacques Ferrand did not know her, nor the motives of her visit, and he therefore scrutinised her carefully in the hope of catching another dupe. He looked most attentively at the countess; and, despite the imperturbability of this marble-fronted woman, he observed a slight working of the eyebrows, which betrayed a repressed embarrassment. The notary rose from his seat, handed a chair,

and, motioning to Sarah to sit down, thus accosted her :

" You have requested of me, madame, an interview for to-day. I was very much engaged yesterday, and could not reply until this morning. I beg you will accept my apology for the delay."

" I was desirous of seeing you, sir, on a matter of the greatest importance. Your reputation for honesty, kindness, and complaisance has made me hope that the step I have taken with you will be successful."

The notary bent forward slightly in his chair.

" I know, sir, that your discretion is perfect."

" It is my duty, madame."

" You are, sir, a man of rigid, moral, and incorruptible character."

" Yes, madame."

" Yet, sir, if you were told that it depended on you to restore life — more than life, reason — to an unhappy mother, should you have the courage to refuse her ?"

" If you will state the circumstances, madame, I shall be better able to reply."

" It is fourteen years since, at the end of the month of December, 1824, a man in the prime of life, and dressed in deep mourning, came to ask you to take, by way of life-annuity, the sum of a hundred and fifty thousand francs (6,000*l.*), which it was desired should be sunk in favour of a child of three years of age, whose parents were desirous of remaining unknown."

" Well, madame ?" said the notary, careful not to reply in the affirmative.

" You assented, and took charge of this sum, agreeing to insure the child a yearly pension of eight thousand francs (320*l.*). Half this income was to accumulate for the child's benefit until of age; the other half was to be paid by you to the person who took care of this little girl."

" Well, madame ?"

"At the end of two years," said Sarah, unable to repress a slight emotion, "on the 28th of November, 1827, the child died."

"Before we proceed any farther, madame, with this conversation, I must know what interest you take in this matter?"

"The mother of this little girl, sir, was — my sister.[1] I have here proofs of what I advance: the declaration of the poor child's death, the letters of the person who took charge of her, and the acknowledgment of one of your clients with whom you have placed the hundred and fifty thousand francs."

"Allow me to see those papers, madame."

Somewhat astonished at not being believed on her word, Sarah drew from a pocketbook several papers, which the notary examined with great attention.

"Well, madame, what do you desire? The declaration of decease is perfectly in order. The hundred and fifty thousand francs came to my client, M. Petit-Jean, on the death of the child. It is one of the chances of life-annuities, as I remarked to the person who placed the affair in my hands. As to the pension, it was duly paid by me up to the time of the child's decease."

"I am ready to declare, sir, that nothing could be more satisfactory than your conduct throughout the whole of the affair. The female who had charge of the child is also entitled to our gratitude, for she took the greatest care of my poor little niece."

"True, madame. And I was so much satisfied with her conduct, that, seeing her out of place after the death of the child, I took her into my employment; and, since that time, she has remained with me."

"Is Madame Séraphin in your service, sir?"

[1] It is, perhaps, unnecessary to remind the reader that the child in question is Fleur-de-Marie, daughter of Rodolph and Sarah, and that the latter, in speaking of a pretended sister, tells a falsehood necessary for her plans, as will be seen. Sarah was convinced, as was Rodolph, also, of the death of the little girl.

"She has been my housekeeper these fourteen years, and I must ever speak in her praise."

"Since that is the case, sir, she may be of the greatest use to us, if you will kindly grant me a request, which may appear strange, perhaps even culpable, at first sight, but when you know the motive —"

"A culpable request, madame, is what I cannot believe you capable of addressing to me."

"Sir, I am acquainted with the rectitude of your principles; but all my hope — my only hope — is in your pity. Under any event, I may rely on your discretion?"

"Madame, you may."

"Well, then, I will proceed. The death of this poor child was so great a shock to her mother, that her grief is as great now as it was fourteen years since, and, having then feared for her life, we are now in dread for her reason."

"Poor mother!" said M. Ferrand, in a tone of sympathy.

"Oh, yes, poor unhappy mother, indeed, sir! for she could only blush at the birth of her child at the time when she lost it; whilst now circumstances are such, that, if the child were still alive, my sister could render her legitimate, be proud of her, and never again allow her to quit her. Thus this incessant regret, coming to add to her other sorrows, we are afraid every hour lest she should be bereft of her senses."

"It is unfortunate that nothing can be done in the matter."

"Yes, sir —"

"What, madame?"

"Suppose some one told the poor mother, 'Your child was reported to be dead, but she did not die: the woman who had charge of her when she was little could vouch for this.'"

"Such a falsehood, madame, would be cruel. Why give so vain a hope to the poor mother?"

"But, supposing it were not a falsehood, sir? or, rather, if the supposition could be realised?"

"By a miracle? If it only required my prayers to be united with your own to obtain this result, I would give them to you from the bottom of my heart, — believe me, madame. Unfortunately, the register of decease is strictly regular."

"Oh, yes, sir, I know well enough that the child is dead; and yet, if you will agree, that misfortune need not be irreparable."

"Is this some riddle, madame?"

"I will speak more clearly. If my sister were to-morrow to recover her daughter, she would be certain not only to be restored to health, but to be wedded to the father of her child, who is now as free as herself. My niece died at six years old. Separated from her parents from a very tender age, they have not the slightest recollection of her. Suppose a young girl of seventeen was produced (my niece would be about that age), — a young girl (such as there are many) forsaken by her parents, — and it was said to my sister, 'Here's your daughter, for you have been imposed upon. Important interests have required that she should have been said to be dead. The female who brought her up and a respectable notary will confirm these facts, and prove to you that it is really she — '"

Jacques Ferrand, after having allowed the countess to speak on without interruption, rose abruptly, and exclaimed, with an indignant air:

"Madame, this is infamous!"

"Sir!"

"To dare to propose such a thing to me — to me! A supposititious child, the destruction of a registry of decease; a criminal act, indeed! It is the first time in my life that I was ever subjected to so outrageous a proposal, — a proposal I have not merited, and you know it!"

"But, sir, what wrong does this do to any one? My sister and the individual she desires to marry are widow and widower, and childless, both bitterly lamenting the child they have lost. To deceive them is to restore them to happiness, to life, is to ensure a happy destiny to some poor, forsaken girl; and it becomes, therefore, a noble, a generous action, and not a crime!"

"Really, madame, I marvel to see how the most execrable projects may be coloured, so as to pass for beautiful pictures!"

"But, sir, reflect —"

"I repeat to you, madame, that it is infamous! And it is shameful to see a lady of your rank lend herself to such abominable machinations, — to which, I trust, your sister is a stranger."

"Sir —"

"Enough, madame, enough! I am not a polished gentleman, I am not, and I shall speak my mind bluntly."

Sarah gave the notary a piercing look with her jet-black eyes, and said, coldly:

"You refuse?"

"I pray, madame, that you will not again insult me."

"Beware!"

"What! Threats?"

"Threats! And that you may learn they are not vain ones, learn, first, that I have no sister —"

"What, madame?"

"I am the mother of this child!"

"You?"

"I — I made a circuitous route to reach my end — coined a tale to excite your interest; but you are pitiless. I raise the mask, you are for war. Well, war be it then!"

"War! Because I refuse to associate myself with you in a criminal machination! What audacity!"

"Listen to me, sir! Your reputation as an honest man is established, acknowledged, undisputed —"

"Because deserved; and, therefore, you must have lost your reason to make me such a proposal as you have done, and then threaten me because I will not accede to it."

"I know, sir, better than any one how much reputations for immaculate virtue are to be distrusted; they often mask wantonness in women and roguery in men."

"Madame?"

"Ever since our conversation began, — I do not know why, but I have mistrusted your claim to the esteem and consideration which you enjoy."

"Really, madame, your mistrust does honour to your penetration!"

"Does it not? For this mistrust is based on mere nothings — on instinct — on inexplicable presentiments; but these intimations have rarely beguiled me."

"Madame, let us terminate this conversation."

"First learn my determination. I begin by telling you that I am convinced of the death of my poor daughter. But, no matter, I shall pretend that she is not dead: the most unlikely things do happen. You are at this moment in a position of which very many must be envious, and would be delighted at any weapon with which to assail you. I will supply one."

"You?"

"I, by attacking you under some absurd pretext, some irregularity in the declaration of death; say — no matter what — I will insist that my child is not dead. As I have the greatest interest in making it believed that she is still alive, though lost, this action will be useful to me in giving a wide circulation to the affair. A mother who claims her child is always interesting; and I should have with me those who envy you, — your enemies, and every sensitive and romantic mind."

"This is as mad as it is malevolent! What motive could I have in making your daughter pass for dead, if she were not really defunct?"

"That is true enough, and the motive may be difficult to find; but, then, have we not the attorneys and barristers at our elbows? Now I think of it (excellent idea!), desirous of sharing with your client the sum sunk in the annuity on this unfortunate child, you caused her disappearance."

The unabashed notary shrugged his shoulders.

"If I had been criminal enough for that, instead of causing its disappearance, I should have killed it!"

Sarah started with surprise, remained silent for a moment, and then said, with bitterness:

"For a pious man, this is an idea of crime deeply reflective! Can I by chance, then, have hit the mark when I fired at random? I must think of this, — and think I will. One other word. You see the sort of woman I am: I crush without remorse all obstacles that lie in my onward path. Reflect well, then, for to-morrow this must be decided on. You may do what I ask you with impunity. In his joy, the father of my daughter will not think of doubting the possibility of his child's restoration, if our falsehoods, which will make him happy, are adroitly combined. Besides, he has no other proofs of the death of our daughter than those I wrote to him of fourteen years ago, and I could easily persuade him that I had deceived him on this subject; for then I had real causes of complaint against him. I will tell him that in my grief I was desirous of breaking every existing tie that bound us to each other. You cannot, therefore, be compromised in any way. Affirm only, irreproachable man. Affirm that all was in former days concerted between us, — you and me and Madame Séraphin, — and you will be credited. As to the fifteen thousand francs sunk in an annuity for my child, that is my affair solely. They will remain acquired by your client, who must be kept profoundly ignorant of this; and, moreover, you shall yourself name your own recompense."

Jacques Ferrand maintained all his *sang-froid* in spite of the singularity of his situation, remarkable and dangerous as it was. The countess, really believing in the death of her daughter, had proposed to the notary to pass off the dead child as living, whom, living, he had declared to have died fourteen years before. He was too clever, and too well acquainted with the perils of his position, not to understand the effect of all Sarah's threats. His reputation, although admirably and laboriously built up, was based on a substructure of sand. The public detaches itself as easily as it becomes infatuated, liking to have the right to trample under foot him whom but just now it elevated to the skies. How could the consequences of the first assault on the reputation of Jacques Ferrand be foreseen? However absurd the attack might be, its very boldness might give rise to suspicions. Wishing to gain time to determine on the mode by which he would seek to parry the dangerous blow, the notary said, frigidly, to Sarah:

"You have given me, madame, until to-morrow at noon; I give you until the next day to renounce a plot whose serious nature you do not seem to have contemplated. If, between this and then, I do not receive from you a letter informing me that you have abandoned this criminal and crazy enterprise, you will learn to your cost that Justice knows how to protect honest people who refuse guilty associations, and what may happen to the concoctors of hateful machinations."

"You mean to say, sir, that you ask from me one more day to reflect on my proposals? That is a good sign, and I grant the delay. The day after to-morrow, at this hour, I will come here again, and it shall be between us peace or war, — I repeat it, — but a 'war to the knife,' without mercy or pity."

And Sarah left the room.

"All goes well," she said. "This miserable girl, in

whom Rodolph capriciously takes so much interest, and has sent to the farm at Bouqueval, in order, no doubt, to make her his mistress hereafter, is no longer to be feared, — thanks to the one-eyed woman who has freed me from her. Rodolph's adroitness has saved Madame d'Harville from the snare into which I meant she should fall; but it is impossible that she can escape from the fresh plot I have laid for her, and thus she must be for ever lost to Rodolph. Thus, saddened, discouraged, isolated from all affection, will he not be in a frame of mind such as will best suit my purpose of making him the dupe of a falsehood to which, by the notary's aid, I can give every impress of truth? And the notary will aid me, for I have frightened him. I shall easily find a young orphan girl, interesting and poor, who, taught her lesson by me, will fill the character of our child so bitterly mourned by Rodolph. I know the expansiveness, the generosity of his heart, — yes, to give a name, a rank to her whom he will believe to be his daughter, till now forsaken and abandoned, he will renew those bonds between us which I believed indissoluble. The predictions of my nurse will be at length realised, and I shall thus and then attain the constant aim of my life, — a crown!"

Sarah had scarcely left the notary before M. Charles Robert entered, after alighting from a very dashing cabriolet. He went like a person on most intimate terms to the private room of Jacques Ferrand.

The commandant, as Madame Pipelet called him, entered without ceremony into the notary's cabinet, whom he found in a surly, bilious mood, and who thus accosted him:

"I reserve the afternoon for my clients; when you wish to speak to me come in the morning, will you?"

"My dear lawyer" (this was a standing pleasantry of M. Robert), "I have a very important matter to talk

about in the first place, and, in the next, I was anxious to assure you in person against any alarms you might have — "

"What alarms?"

"What! Haven't you heard?"

"What?"

"Of my duel — "

"Your duel?"

"With the Duke de Lucenay. Is it possible you have not heard of it?"

"Quite possible."

"Pooh! pooh!"

"But what did you fight about?"

"A very serious matter, which called for bloodshed. Only imagine that, at a very large party, M. de Lucenay actually said that I had a phlegmy cough!"

"That you had — "

"A phlegmy cough, my dear lawyer; a complaint which is really most ridiculously absurd!"

"And did you fight about that?"

"What the devil would you have a man fight about? Can you imagine that a man could stand calmly and hear himself charged with having a phlegmy cough? And before a lovely woman, too! Before a little marchioness, who — who — In a word, I could not stand it!"

"Really!"

"The military men, you see, are always sensitive. My seconds went, the day before yesterday, to try and obtain some explanation from those of the duke. I put the matter perfectly straight, — a duel or an ample apology."

"An ample apology for what?"

"For the phlegmy cough, *pardieu!* — the phlegmy cough that he fastened on me."

The notary shrugged his shoulders.

"The duke's seconds said, 'We bear testimony to the

honourable character of M. Charles Robert, but M. de Lucenay cannot, ought not, and will not retract.' 'Then, gentlemen,' replied my seconds, 'M. de Lucenay is obstinately determined to assert that M. Charles Robert has a phlegmy cough?' 'Yes, gentlemen, but he does not therefore mean in the slightest way to impugn the high respectability of M. Charles Robert.' 'Then let him retract—' 'No, gentlemen, M. de Lucenay acknowledges M. Robert as a most decidedly worthy gentleman, but still asserts that he has a phlegmy cough.' You see there was no means of arranging so serious an affair."

"To be sure not. You were insulted in the point which a man holds dearest."

"Wasn't I? Well, time and place were agreed on; and yesterday morning we met at Vincennes, and everything passed off in the most honourable manner possible. I touched M. de Lucenay slightly in the arm, and the seconds declared that honour was satisfied. Then the duke, with a loud voice, said, 'I never retract before a meeting, but, afterwards, it is a very different thing. It is, therefore, my duty, and my honour impels me to declare, that I falsely accused M. Charles Robert of having a phlegmy cough. Gentlemen, I not only declare that my honourable opponent had not a phlegmy cough, but I trust he never will have one.' Then the duke extended his hand in the most cordial manner, saying, 'Are you now satisfied?' 'We are friends through life and death,' I replied; and it was really due to him to say so. The duke has behaved to perfection. Either he might have said nothing, or contented himself with declaring that I had not the phlegmy cough. But to express his wish that I might never have it, was a most delicate attention on his part."

"This is what I call courage well employed! But what do you want?"

"My dear cashkeeper" (this was another of M. Robert's habitual pleasantries), "it is a matter of great importance

to me. You know that, according to our agreement, I have advanced to you three hundred and fifty thousand francs (14,000*l.*) to complete a particular payment you had; and it was stipulated that I was to give you three months' notice of my wish to withdraw that money, the interest of which you pay me regularly."

"Go on."

"Well," said M. Robert, hesitatingly, "I — no — that is — "

"What?"

"Why, it is only a whim of becoming a landed proprietor."

"Come to the point, pray! You annoy me."

"In a word, then, I am anxious to become a landed proprietor. And, if not inconvenient to you, I should like — that is I should wish — to have my funds now in your hands; and I came to say so."

"Ah, ah!"

"That does not offend you, I hope?"

"Why should I be offended?"

"Because you might think — "

"I might think — ?"

"That I am the echo of certain reports — "

"What reports?"

"Oh, nothing. Mere folly."

"But, tell me — "

"Oh, there can be no certainty in the gossip about you!"

"What gossip?"

"Oh, it is false from beginning to end. But there are chatterers who say that you are mixed up in some unpleasant transactions. Idle gossip, I am quite certain. It is just the same as the report that you and I speculated on the Exchange together. These reports soon died away. For I will always say that — "

"So you suppose that your money is not safe with me?"

"Quite. Now I'll thank you to go out this way."

"And so not see the lady?"

"Precisely so."

And the notary rang; and when the chief clerk made his appearance, he said:

"Ask the lady to walk in. Good day, M. Robert."

"Well, I see I must give up the chance of seeing her. Don't bear malice, lawyer. Believe me, if — "

"There — there; that'll do. Good-bye." And the notary shut the door on M. Charles Robert.

After the lapse of a few moments, the chief clerk introduced the Duchess de Lucenay, very simply attired, wearing a large shawl, and her features entirely concealed by a thick veil of black lace, depending from her watered silk bonnet of the same colour.

Madame de Lucenay, a good deal agitated, walked slowly towards the notary's bureau, who advanced a few paces to meet her.

"Who are you, madame; and what may be your business with me?" said Jacques Ferrand, abruptly; for Sarah's menaces and M. Charles Robert's suspicions had a good deal ruffled him. Moreover, the duchess was clad so simply, that the notary did not see any reason why he should not be rude. As she did not immediately reply, he continued, abruptly:

"Will you be so kind as to inform me, madame?"

"Sir," she said, in a faltering voice, and endeavouring to conceal her face in the folds of her veil, "Sir, may I entrust you with a secret of extreme importance?"

"You may trust me with anything, madame. But it is requisite that I should know and see to whom I speak."

"That, sir, perhaps, is not necessary. I know that you are probity and honour itself — "

"To the point, madame, — to the point. I have some one waiting for me. Who are you?"

"My name is of no consequence, sir. One — of — my friends, — a relative, — has just left you."

"His name?"

"M. Florestan de Saint-Remy."

"Ah!" said the notary; and he cast a scrutinising and steadfast glance on the duchess. Then he added, "Well, madame?"

"M. de Saint-Remy has told me — ıll, — sir!"

"What has he told you, madame?"

"All!"

"What all?"

"Sir; you know —"

"I know many things about M. de Saint-Remy."

"Alas, sir, this is a terrible thing!"

"I know many terrible things about M. de Saint-Remy."

"Oh, sir, he was right when he told me that you were pitiless."

"For swindlers and forgers like him, — yes, I am pitiless. So this Saint-Remy is a relative of yours? Instead of owning it, you ought to blush at it. Do you mean to try and soften me with your tears? It is useless, — not to add that you have undertaken a very disgraceful task for a respectable female."

At this coarse insolence the pride and patrician blood of the duchess revolted. She drew herself up, threw back her veil; and then, with a lofty air, imperious glance, and firm voice, said:

"I am the Duchess de Lucenay, sir!"

The lady then assumed the lofty look of her station; and her appearance was so imposing that the notary, controlled, fascinated, receded a pace, quite overcome, took off mechanically the black silk cap that covered his cranium, and made a low bow.

In truth, nothing could be more charming and aristocratic than the face and figure of Madame de Lucenay, although she was turned thirty, and her features were pale and somewhat agitated. But then she had full, brown eyes, sparkling and bold; splendid black hair; a

nose thin and arched; a lip red and disdainful; a dazzling complexion; teeth of ivory; and a form tall and slender, graceful, and full of distinction, — the carriage of a goddess in the clouds, as the immortal Saint-Simon says. With her hair powdered, and a costume of the eighteenth century, Madame de Lucenay would have represented, physically and morally, one of those gay and careless duchesses of the Regency who carried on their flirtations (or worse) with so much audacity, giddiness, and real kindness of heart, who confessed their peccadilloes from time to time with so much candour and naïveté, that the most punctilious said, with a smile, "She is, doubtless, light and culpable; but she is so kind — so delightful; loves with so much intensity, passion, and fidelity, — as long as she does love, — that we cannot really be angry with her. After all, she only injures herself, and makes so many others happy!" Except the powder and the large skirts to her dress, such also was Madame de Lucenay, when not depressed by sombre thoughts. She entered the office of M. Jacques Ferrand like a plain tradesman's wife; in the instant she came forth as a great, proud, and irritated lady. Jacques Ferrand had never in his life seen a woman of such striking beauty, — so haughty and bold, and so noble in her demeanour. The look of the duchess, her glorious eyes, encircled with an imperceptible bow of azure, her rosy nostrils, much dilated, betokened her ardent nature.

Although old, ugly, ignoble, and sordid, Jacques Ferrand was as capable as any one of appreciating the style of beauty of Madame de Lucenay. The hatred and rage which the notary felt against M. de Saint-Remy was increased by the admiration which his proud and lovely mistress inspired in him. Devoured by all his repressed passions, he said to himself, in an agony of rage, that this gentleman forger, whom he had compelled almost to fall at his feet when he threatened him with the assizes, could inspire such love in such a woman that

she actually risked the present step in his behalf, which might prove fatal to her reputation. As he thus thought, the notary felt his boldness, which had been for a moment paralysed, restored to him. Hatred, envy, a kind of savage and burning resentment, lighted up his eyes, his forehead, and his cheeks. Seeing Madame de Lucenay on the point of commencing so delicate a conversation, he expected from her caution and management. What was his astonishment! She spoke with as much assurance and haughtiness as if she were discoursing about the simplest thing in the world; and as if, before a man of his sort, she had no care for reserve or those concealments which she would assuredly have maintained with her equals. In fact, the coarse brutality of the notary wounded her to the quick, and had led Madame de Lucenay to quit the humble and supplicating part she was acting with much difficulty to herself. Returned to herself, she thought it beneath her to descend to the least concealment with a mere scribbler of acts and deeds. High-spirited, charitable, generous, overflowing with kindness, warm-heartedness, and energy, in spite of her faults, — but the daughter of a mother of no principle, and who had even disgraced the noble and respectable, though fallen position of an *émigrée*, — Madame de Lucenay, in her inborn contempt for certain classes, would have said with the Roman empress who took her bath in the presence of a male slave, "He is not a man!"

"Monsieur Notary," said the duchess, with a determined air, to Jacques Ferrand, "M. de Saint-Remy is one of my friends, and has confided to me the embarrassment under which he is at this moment suffering, from a twofold treachery of which he is the victim. All is arranged as to the money. How much is required to terminate these miserable annoyances?"

Jacques Ferrand was actually aghast at this cavalier and deliberate manner of entering on this affair.

"One hundred thousand francs are required," he repeated, after having in some degree surmounted his surprise.

"You shall have your one hundred thousand francs; so send, at once, these annoying papers to M. de Saint-Remy."

"Where are the one hundred thousand francs, Madame la Duchesse?"

"Have I not said you should have them, sir?"

"I must have them to-morrow, and before noon, madame; or else proceedings will be instantly commenced for the forgery."

"Well, do you pay this sum, which I will repay to you."

"But madame, it is impossible."

"But, sir, you will not tell me, I imagine, that a notary, like you, cannot find one hundred thousand francs by to-morrow morning?"

"On what securities, madame?"

"What do you mean? Explain!"

"Who will be answerable to me for this sum?"

"I will."

"Still, madame —"

"Need I say that I have an estate four leagues from Paris, which brings me in eighty thousand francs (3,200*l.*) a year? That will suffice, I should think, for what you call your securities?"

"Yes, madame, when the mortgage is properly secured."

"What do you mean? Some formality of law, no doubt? Do it, sir, do it."

"Such a deed cannot be drawn up in less than a fortnight, and we must have your husband's assent, madame."

"But the estate is mine, and mine only," said the duchess, impatiently.

"No matter, madame, you have a husband; and mortgage deeds are very long and very minute."

"But, once again, sir, you will not ask me to believe that it is so difficult to find one hundred thousand francs in two hours?"

"Then, madame, apply to the notary you usually employ, or your steward; as for me, it is impossible."

"I have my reasons for keeping this secret," said Madame de Lucenay, haughtily. "You know the rogues who seek to take advantage of M. de Saint-Remy, and that is the reason why I address myself to you."

"Your confidence does me much honour, madame; but I cannot do what you ask of me."

"You have not this sum?"

"I have much more than that sum, in bank-notes or bright and good gold, here in my chest."

"Then why waste time about it? You require my signature, I suppose? Well, let me give it to you, and let us end the matter."

"Even admitting, madame, that you were Madame de Lucenay —"

"Come to the Hôtel de Lucenay in one hour, sir, and I will sign whatever may be requisite."

"And will the duke sign, also?"

"I do not understand, sir."

"Your signature, alone, would be worthless to me, madame."

Jacques Ferrand delighted, with cruel joy, in the manifest impatience of the duchess, who, under the appearance of coolness and hauteur, repressed really painful agony.

For an instant she was at her wits' end. On the previous evening, her jeweller had advanced her a considerable sum on her jewels, some of which had been confided to Morel, the lapidary. This sum had been employed in paying the bills of M. de Saint-Remy, and thus disarming the other creditors; M. Dubreuil, the farmer of Arnouville, was more than a year's rent in advance

on the farm ; and, then, the time was so pressing. Still more unfortunately for Madame de Lucenay, two of her friends, to whom she could have had recourse in this moment of distress, were then absent from Paris. In her eyes, the viscount was innocent of the forgery. He had said, and she had believed him, that he was the victim of two rogues; but yet his position was not the less terrible. He accused! He led to prison! And, even if he took flight, his name would be no less dishonoured by the suspicion that would light on him. At these distressing thoughts, Madame de Lucenay trembled with affright. She blindly loved this man, at the same time so degraded, and gifted with such strong seductive powers; and her passion for him was one of those affections which women, of her character and her temperament, ordinarily experience when they attain an age of maturity.

Jacques Ferrand carefully watched every variation in the physiognomy of Madame de Lucenay, who seemed to him more lovely and attractive at every moment, and awakened still more his ardent feeling. Yet he felt a fierce pleasure in tormenting, by his refusals, this female, who could only entertain disgust and contempt for him. The lady had spurned the idea of saying a word to the notary that might seem like a supplication; yet, when she found the uselessness of other attempts, which she had addressed to him who alone could save M. de Saint-Remy, she said, at length, trying to repress all evidence of emotion:

"Since you have the sum of money which I ask of you, sir, and my guarantee is sufficient, why do you refuse it to me?"

"Because men have their caprices, as well as ladies, madame."

"Well, what is this caprice which thus impels you to act against your own interest? For I repeat, sir, that whatever may be your conditions, I accept them."

"You will accept all my conditions, madame?" said the notary, with a singular expression.

"All, — two, three, four thousand francs, more, if you please. For you must know, sir," added the duchess, in a tone almost confidential, "I have no resource but in you, sir, and in you only. It will be impossible for me at this moment to find elsewhere what I require for to-morrow, and I must have it, as you know, — I must absolutely have it. Thus I repeat to you that, whatever terms you require for this service, I accept them; nothing will be a sacrifice to me, — nothing."

The breath of the notary became thick, and, in his ignoble blindness, he interpreted the last words of Madame de Lucenay in an unworthy manner. He saw, through his darkened understanding, a woman as bold as some of the females of the old court, — a woman driven to her wits' end for fear of the dishonour of him whom she loved, and capable, perhaps, of any sacrifice to save him. It was even more stupid than infamous to think so, but, as we have said already, Jacques Ferrand sometimes, though rarely, forgot himself.

He quitted his chair abruptly, and approached Madame de Lucenay, who, surprised, rose when he did, and looked at him with much astonishment.

"Nothing will be a sacrifice to you, say you? To you, who are so lovely?" he exclaimed, with a voice trembling and broken with agitation, as he went towards the duchess. "Well, then, I will lend you this sum, on one condition, — one condition only, — and I swear to you — "

He could not finish his declaration.

By one of those singular contradictions of human nature, at the sight of the singularly ugly features of M. Ferrand, at the strange and whimsical thoughts which arose in Madame de Lucenay's mind, at his ridiculous pretensions, which she guessed in spite of her disquietude

and anxiety, she burst into a fit of laughter, so hearty, so loud, and so excessive, that the disconcerted notary reeled back. Then, without allowing him a moment to utter another word, the duchess gave way still more to her increasing mirth, lowered her veil, and, between two bursts of irrepressible laughter, she said to the notary, overwhelmed by hatred, rage, and fury:

"Really, I should much rather prefer asking this advance from M. de Lucenay."

She then left the room, laughing so heartily that, even when the door of his room was closed, the notary heard her still.

Jacques Ferrand no sooner recovered his reason than he cursed his imprudence; but he became reassured on reflecting that the duchess could not allude to this adventure without compromising herself. Still, the day had been unpropitious, and he was plunged in thought when the door of his study opened, and Madame Séraphin entered in great agitation.

"Ah, Ferrand," she exclaimed, "you were right when you declared that, one day or other, we should be ruined for having allowed her to live!"

"Who?"

"That cursed little girl!"

"What do you mean?"

"A one-eyed woman, whom I did not know, and to whom Tournemine gave the little chit to get rid of her, fourteen years ago, when we wished to make her pass for dead — Ah, who would have thought it!"

"Speak! Speak! Why don't you speak?"

"This one-eyed woman has been here, was down-stairs just now, and told me that she knew it was I who had delivered up the little brat."

"Malediction! Who could have told her? Tournemine is at the galleys."

"I denied it, and treated the one-eyed woman as

a liar. But bah! she declares she knows where the girl is now, and that she has grown up, that she has her, and that it only depends on her to discover everything."

"Is hell, then, unchained against me to-day?" exclaimed the notary, in a fit of rage. "What shall I say to this woman? What shall I offer her to hold her tongue? Does she seem well off?"

"As I treated her like a beggar, she shook her handbasket, and there was money inside of it."

"And she knows where this young girl is now?"

"So she says."

"And she is the daughter of the Countess Sarah Macgregor!" said the stupefied notary; "and just now she offered me so much to declare that her daughter was not dead; and the girl is alive, and I can restore her to her mother! But, then, the false register of her death! If a search were made, I am ruined! This crime may put others on the scent."

After a moment's silence, he said to Madame Séraphin:

"This one-eyed woman knows where the child is?"

"Yes."

"And the woman will call again?"

"To-morrow."

"Write to Polidori, to come to me this evening, at nine o'clock."

"What! Will you rid yourself of the young girl and the old woman, too? Ferrand, that will be too much at once!"

"I bid you write to Polidori, to come here this evening, at nine o'clock!"

At the end of this day, Rodolph said to Murphy:

"Desire M. de Graün to despatch a courier this instant; Cecily must be in Paris in six days."

"What! that she-devil again? The diabolical wife of

poor David, as beautiful as she is infamous! For what purpose, monseigneur?"

"For what purpose, Sir Walter Murphy? Ask that question, in a month hence, of the notary, Jacques Ferrand."

CHAPTER VI.

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER.

Towards ten o'clock in the evening of the same day in which Fleur-de-Marie was carried off by the Chouette and Schoolmaster, a man on horseback arrived at the Bouqueval farm, representing himself as coming from M. Rodolph to tranquillise Madame Georges as to the safety of her young friend, and to assure her of her safe return ere long. The man further stated that M. Rodolph, having very important reasons for making the request, particularly desired no letters might be addressed to him at Paris for the present; but that, in the event of Madame Georges having anything particular to communicate, the messenger now sent would take charge of it, and deliver it punctually.

This pretended envoy on the part of Rodolph was, in fact, an emissary sent by Sarah, who, by this stratagem, effected the twofold purpose of quieting the apprehensions of Madame Georges and also obtaining a delay of several days ere Rodolph learned that the Goualeuse had been carried off; during which interval Sarah hoped to have induced the notary, Jacques Ferrand, to promote her unworthy attempt to impose a supposititious child on Rodolph, after the manner which has already been related. Nor was this all the evil planned by the countess; she ardently desired to get rid of Madame d'Harville, on whose account she entertained very serious misgivings, and whose destruction

she had so nearly compassed, but for the timely interposition of Rodolph.

On the day following that in which the marquis followed his wife into the house in the Rue du Temple, Tom repaired thither, and, by skilfully drawing Madame Pipelet into conversation, contrived to learn from her how a young and elegantly dressed lady, upon the point of being surprised by her husband, had been preserved through the presence of mind and cleverness of a lodger in the house, named M. Rodolph.

Once informed of this circumstance, and possessing no positive proof of the assignation made by Clémence with M. Charles Robert, Sarah conceived a plan evidently more hateful than the former: she resolved to despatch a second anonymous letter to M. d'Harville, calculated to bring about a complete rupture between himself and Rodolph; or, failing that, to infuse into the mind of the marquis suspicions so unworthy of his wife and friend as should induce him to forbid Madame d'Harville ever admitting the prince into her society.

This black and malignant epistle was couched in the following terms:

"... You have been grossly deceived the other day; your wife, being apprised of your following her, invented a tale of imaginary beneficence; the real purpose of her visit to the Rue du Temple was to fulfil an assignation with an august personage, who has hired a room on the fourth floor in the house situated Rue du Temple, — this illustrious individual being known only at his lodging under the simple name of Rodolph. Should you doubt these facts, which may probably appear to you too improbable to deserve credit, go to No. 17 Rue du Temple, and make due inquiries; obtain a description of the face and figure of the august personage alluded to; and you will be compelled to own yourself the most credulous and easily duped husband that was ever so royally supplanted in the affections of his wife. Despise not this advice, if you would not have the world believe you carry your devotion to your prince rather too far."

This infamous concoction was put into the post by Sarah herself, about five o'clock in the afternoon of the

day which had witnessed her interview with the notary.

On this same day, after having given renewed directions to M. de Graün to expedite the arrival of Cecily in Paris by every means in his power, Rodolph prepared to pass the evening with the Ambassadress of ——, and on his return to call on Madame d'Harville, for the purpose of informing her he had found a charitable intrigue worthy even of her coöperation.

We shall now conduct our readers to the hôtel of Madame d'Harville. The following dialogue will abundantly prove that, in adopting a tone of kind and gentle conciliation towards a husband she had hitherto treated with such invariable coldness and reserve, the heart of Madame d'Harville had already determined to practise the sound and virtuous sentiments dictated by Rodolph. The marquis and his lady had just quitted the dinner-table, and the scene we are about to describe took place in the elegant little salon we have already spoken of. The features of Clémence wore an expression of kindness almost amounting to tenderness, and even M. d'Harville appeared less sad and dejected than usual. It only remains to premise that the marquis had not as yet received the last infamous production of the pen of Sarah Macgregor.

"What are your arrangements for this evening?" inquired M. d'Harville, almost mechanically, of his wife.

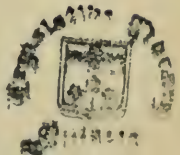
"I have no intention of going out. And what are your own plans?"

"I hardly know," answered he, with a sigh. "I feel more than ordinarily averse to gaiety, and I shall pass my evening, as I have passed many others, alone."

"Nay, but why alone, since I am not going out?"

M. d'Harville gazed at his wife as though unable to comprehend her. "I am aware," said he, "that you mentioned your intention to pass this evening at home; still, I —"

"Pray go on, my lord."



"I did not imagine you would choose to have your solitude broken in upon. I believe you have always expressed a wish to be alone when you did not receive company?"

"Perhaps I may have done so," said Clémence, with a smile; "but let me, for once, plead my sex's privilege of changing my mind, and so, even at the risk of astonishing you by my caprice, I will own that I should greatly prefer sharing my solitude with you, — that is, if it would be quite agreeable to you."

"Oh, how very good of you," exclaimed M. d'Harville, with much delight, "thus to anticipate my most ardent desire, which I durst not have requested had you not so kindly encouraged me!"

"Ah, my lord, your very surprise is a severe reproach to me."

"A reproach! Oh, not for worlds would I have you so understand me! But to find you so kindly considerate, so attentive to my wishes, after my cruel and unjust conduct the other day, does, I confess, both shame and surprise me; though the surprise is of the most gratifying and delightful sort."

"Come, come, my lord," said Madame d'Harville, with a smile of heavenly sweetness, "let the past be for ever forgotten between us."

"Can you, Clémence," said M. d'Harville, "can you bring yourself to forget that I have dared to suspect you; that, hurried on by a wild, insensate jealousy, I meditated violence I now shudder to think of? Still, what are even these deep offences to the greater and more irreparable wrong I have done you?"

"Again I say," returned Clémence, making a violent effort to command herself, "let us forget the past."

"What do I hear? Can you, — oh, is it possible you will pardon me, and forget all the past?"

"I will try to do so, and I fear not but I shall succeed."

"Oh, Clémence! Can you, indeed, be so generous?

But no, no, — I dare not hope it! I have long since resigned all expectation that such happiness would ever be mine."

"And now you see how wrong you were in coming to such a conclusion."

"But how comes this blessed change? Or do I dream? Speak to me, Clémence! Tell me I am not deceiving myself, — that all is not mere illusion! Speak! Say that I may trust my senses!"

"Indeed you may; I mean all I have said."

"And, now I look at you, I see more kindness in your eye, — your manner is less cold, — your voice tremulous. Oh, tell me, tell me, is this indeed true? Or am I the sport of some illusion?"

"Nay, my lord, all is true, and safely to be believed. I, too, have need of pardon at your hands, and therefore I propose that we mutually exchange forgiveness."

"You, Clémence! You need forgiveness! Oh, for what, or wherefore?"

"Have I not been frequently unkind, unrelenting, and perhaps even cruel, towards you? Ought I not to have remembered that it required a more than ordinary share of courage to act otherwise than you did, — a virtue more than human to renounce the hope of exchanging a cheerless, solitary life, for one of wedded sympathy and happiness? Alas, when we are in grief or suffering, it is so natural to trust to the kindness and goodness of others! Hitherto your fault has been in depending too much on my generosity; henceforward it shall be my aim to show you, you have not trusted in vain."

"Oh, go on! Go on! Continue still to utter such heavenly words!" exclaimed M. d'Harville, gazing in almost ecstasy on the countenance of his wife, and clasping his hands in fervid supplication. "Let me again hear you pronounce my pardon, and it will seem as though a new existence were opening upon me."

"Our destinies are inseparably united, and death only

can dissever us. Believe me, it shall for the future be my study to render life less painful to you than it has been."

"Merciful Heaven! Do I hear aright? Clémence, can it be you who have spoken these dear, these enchanting words?"

"Let me conjure you to spare me the pain and humiliation of hearing you express so much astonishment at my speaking as my duty prompts me to do; indeed, your reluctance to credit my assertions grieves me more than I can describe. How cruel a censure does it imply upon my past conduct! Ah, who will pity and soothe you in your severe trials, if not I? I seem inspired by some holy voice, speaking within my breast, to reflect upon my past conduct. I have deeply meditated on all that has happened, as well as on the future. My faults rise up in judgment against me; but with them come also the whisperings of my awakened feelings, teaching me how to repair my past errors."

"Your errors, my poor injured Clémence! Alas, you were not to blame!"

"Yes, I was. I ought frankly to have appealed to your honour to release me from the painful necessity of living with you as your wife; and that, too, on the day following our marriage, —"

"Clémence, for pity's sake no more!"

"Otherwise, in accepting my position, I ought to have elevated it by my entire submission and devotion. Under the circumstances in which I was placed, instead of allowing my coldness and proud reserve to act as a continual reproach, I should have directed all my endeavours to console you for so heavy a misfortune, and have forgotten everything but the severe affliction under which you laboured. By degrees I should have become attached to my work of commiseration, and, probably, the very cares and sacrifices it would have required to fulfil my voluntary duty; for which your grateful appreciation would have been a rich reward. I might, at last — But what

ails you, my lord? Are you ill? Surely you are weeping!"

"But they are tears of pure delight. Ah, you can scarcely imagine what new emotions are awakened in my heart! Heed not my tears, beloved Clémence; trust me, they flow from an excess of happiness, arising from those dear words you just now uttered. Never did I seem so guilty in my own eyes as I now appear, for having selfishly bound you to such a life as mine!"

"And never did I find myself more disposed to forget the past, and to bury all reference to it in oblivion; the sight of your gently falling tears, even, seems to open to me a source of happiness hitherto unknown to me. Courage! Courage! Let us, in place of that bright and prosperous life denied us by Providence, seek our enjoyment in the discharge of the serious duties allotted us. Let us be mutually indulgent and forbearing towards each other; and, should our resolution fail, let us turn to our child, and make her the depositary of all our affections. Thus shall we secure to ourselves an unfailing store of holy, of tranquil joys."

"Sure, 'tis some angel speaks!" cried M. d'Harville, contemplating his wife with impassioned looks. "Oh, Clémence, you little know the pleasure and the pain you cause me. The severest reproach you ever addressed me — your hardest word or most merited rebuke never touched me as does this angelic devotion, this disregard of self, this generous sacrifice of personal enjoyment. Even despite myself, I feel hope spring up within me. I dare hardly trust myself to believe the blessed future which suggests itself to my imagination."

"Ah, you may safely and implicitly believe all I say, Albert! I declare to you, by all that is sacred and solemn, that I have firmly taken the resolution I spoke of, and that I will adhere to it in strictest word and deed. Hereafter I may even be enabled to give you further pledges of my truth."

"Pledges!" exclaimed M. d'Harville, more and more excited by a happiness so wholly unlooked for. "What need have I of any pledges? Do not your look, your tone, the heavenly expression of goodness which animates your countenance, the rapturous pulsations of my own heart, all convince me of the truth of your words? But, Clémence, man, you know, is a creature not easily satisfied; and," added the marquis, approaching his wife's chair, "your noble, generous conduct inspires me with the boldness, the courage, to hope — to hope, — yes, Clémence, to venture to hope for that which, only yesterday, I should have considered it even worse than madness to presume to think of."

"For mercy's sake, explain yourself!" said Clémence, alarmed at the impassioned words and glances of her husband.

"Yes," cried he, seizing her hand, "yes, by dint of tender, untiring, unwearied love, — Clémence, do you understand me? — I say, by dint of love such as mine I venture to hope to obtain a return of my affection. I dare to anticipate being loved by you, — not with a cold, lukewarm regard, but with a passion ardent as my own for you. Ah, you know not the real nature of such a love as I would inspire you with! Alas! I never even dared to breathe it in your ears, — so frigid, so repulsive were you to me. Never did you bestow on me a look, a word of kindness, far less make my heart leap with such joy as thrilled through my breast but now, when your words of sweet and gentle tenderness drew happy tears from my eyes, and which, still ringing in my ears, make me almost beside myself with gladness; and, amid the intoxicating delight which floats through my brain, comes the proud consciousness of having earned even so rich a reward by the deep, the passionate ardour of my love for you. Oh, Clémence, when you will let me only tell you half I have suffered, — how I have writhed in despairing anguish at your

coldness, your disdain, how I have watched and sighed in vain for one encouraging glance, — you will own that, for patient devotion to one beloved object, I am inferior to none. Whence arose that melancholy, that avoidance of all society, our best friends have so fruitlessly sought to rouse me from? Can you not guess the cause? Ah, it originated in desolation of spirit and despair of ever obtaining your love. Yes, dearest Clémence, to that overwhelming dread was owing the sombre taciturnity, the dislike to company, the despondingloom, which excited so many different conjectures. Think, too, how much my sufferings must have been increased by the fact that she, the beloved object of my heart's idolatry, was my own, — legally, irrevocably mine, — dwelling beneath the same roof, yet more completely alienated from me than though we dwelt in the opposite parts of the earth. But my burning sighs, my bitter tears, reached not you; or, I feel almost persuaded, they would have moved even you to pity me. And now it seems to me that you must have divined my sufferings, and have come, like an angel of goodness as you are, to whisper in my ears bright promises of days of unclouded happiness. No longer shall I be doomed to gaze in unavailing yet doting admiration on your graceful beauty; no more shall I account myself most blessed yet most accursed in possessing a creature of matchless excellence, whose charms of mind and body, alas! I am forbidden to consider as mine; but now the envious barrier which has thus long divided us is about to be withdrawn, and the treasure my beating heart tells me is all my own will henceforward be freely, indisputably mine! Will it not, dear Clémence? Speak to me, and confirm that which the busy throbbings of my joyful heart tell me to hope for and expect, as the reward of all I have so long endured!"

As M. d'Harville uttered these last words, he seized the hand of his wife, and covered it with passionate

kisses; while Clémence, much grieved at the mistake her husband had fallen into, could not avoid withdrawing her hand with a mixture of terror and disgust. And the expression of her countenance so plainly bespoke her feelings, that M. d'Harville saw at once the fearful error he had committed. The blow fell with redoubled force after the tender visions he had so lately conjured up. A look of intense agony replaced the bright exultation of his countenance exhibited a little while since, when Madame d'Harville, eagerly extending her hand towards him, said, in an agitated tone:

"Albert, receive my solemn promise to be unto you as the most tender and affectionate sister, — but nothing more. Forgive me, I beseech you, if, inadvertently, my words have inspired you with hopes which can never be realised."

"Never?" exclaimed M. d'Harville, fixing on his wife a look of despairing entreaty.

"Never!" answered she. The single word, with the tone in which it was spoken, proved but too well the irrevocable decision Clémence had formed.

Brought back, by the influence of Rodolph, to all her nobleness of character, Madame d'Harville had firmly resolved to bestow on her husband every kind and affectionate attention; but to love him she felt utterly out of her power; and to this immutable resolution she was driven by a power more forcible than either fear, contempt, or even dislike, — it was a species of repugnance almost amounting to horror.

After a painful silence of some duration, M. d'Harville passed his hand across his moist eyelids and said, in a voice of bitterness:

"Let me entreat your pardon for the unintentional mistake I have made. Oh, refuse not to forgive me for having ventured to believe that happiness could exist for me!"

And again a long pause ensued, broken at last by

D'Harville's vehemently exclaiming, "What a wretch am I!"

"Albert," said Clémence, gently, "for worlds would I not reproach you; yet is my promise of being unto you the most loving and affectionate of sisters unworthy any estimation? You will receive from the tender cares of devoted friendship more solid happiness than love could afford. Look forward to brighter days. Hitherto you have found me almost indifferent to your sorrows; you shall henceforward find me all zeal and solicitude to alleviate them, and eager to share with you every grief or cause of suffering, whether of body or of mind."

At this moment a servant, throwing open the folding doors, announced:

"His Highness the Grand Duke of Gerolstein."

M. d'Harville started; then, by a powerful effort, recovering his self-command, he advanced to meet his visitor.

"I am singularly fortunate, madame," said Rodolph, approaching Clémence, "to find you at home to-night; and I am still more delighted with my good fortune, since it procures me the pleasure of meeting you, also, my dear Albert," continued he, turning to the marquis, and shaking him cordially by the hand.

"It is, indeed, some time since I have had the honour of paying my respects to your royal highness."

"If the truth must be spoken, my dear Albert," said the prince, smilingly, "you are somewhat platonic in your friendships, and, relying on the certain attachment of your friends, care very little about either giving or receiving any outward proof of affection."

By a breach of etiquette, which somewhat annoyed Madame d'Harville, a servant here entered the room with a letter for the marquis. It was the anonymous epistle of Sarah, accusing Rodolph of being the lover of Madame d'Harville.

The marquis, out of deference for the prince, put

away with his hand the small silver salver presented to him by the servant, saying, in an undertone:

"Another time, — another time."

"My dear Albert," said Rodolph, in a voice of the most genuine affection, "why all this ceremony with me?"

"My lord!"

"With Madame d'Harville's permission, let me beg of you to read your letter without delay."

"I assure you, my lord, it is not of the slightest consequence."

"Again I say, Albert, read your letter all the same for my being here."

"But, my lord, indeed — "

"Nay, I ask you to do so; or, if you will have it, I desire you to read it immediately."

"If your highness commands it, my duty is obedience," said the marquis, taking the letter from the salver.

"Yes, I positively command you to treat me as one old friend ought to treat another." Then turning towards Madame d'Harville, while the marquis was breaking the seal of the fatal letter, the contents of which were, of course, unknown to Rodolph, he said, smilingly, to Madame d'Harville:

"What a triumph for you, madame, to bend this untractable spirit, and make it bow to your very caprice!"

M. d'Harville having opened Sarah's infamous letter, approached the wax-lights burning on the mantelpiece, the better to read it. His features bore no visible mark of agitation as he perused the vile scrawl. A slight trembling of the hand alone was visible, as, after a short hesitation, he refolded the paper and placed it in the pocket of his waistcoat.

"At the risk of passing for a perfect Goth," said he, with a smile, to Rodolph, "I will ask you to excuse me,

my lord, while I retire to reply to this letter, which is more important than it at first appeared."

"Shall I not see you again this evening?"

"I am fearful I shall not have that honour, my lord; and I trust your royal highness will condescend to excuse me."

"What a slippery person you are!" cried Rodolph, gaily. "Will you not, madame, endeavour to prevent his quitting us?"

"Nay, I dare not attempt that your highness has failed to accomplish."

"But seriously, my dear Albert, endeavour to come back as soon as you have concluded your letter; or, if that is not possible, promise to give me a few minutes in the morning. I have a thousand things to say to you."

"Your highness overwhelms me with kindness," answered the marquis, as, bowing profoundly, he withdrew, leaving Clémence and the prince alone.

"Your husband has some heavy care on his mind," observed Rudolph to the marquise; "his smile appeared to me a forced one."

"At the moment of your highness's arrival, M. d'Harville was much excited, and he has had great difficulty in concealing his agitation from you."

"My visit was, probably, *mal à propos?*"

"Oh, no, my lord! You came just in time to spare me the conclusion of a most painful conversation."

"Indeed! May I inquire the subject of it?"

"I had explained to M. d'Harville the line of conduct I had determined to pursue towards him for the future, assuring him of my future sympathy and affectionate attention to his happiness."

"How happy you must have rendered him by such gratifying words!"

"He did, indeed, at first, seem most truly happy; and so was I, likewise; for his tears and his joys caused in

me a feeling of delight I never before experienced. Once I fancied I did but indulge a just revenge each time I addressed to him a reproach or a sarcasm; but it was a weak and impotent mode of torture, which always recoiled upon myself, as my better judgment pointed out the unworthiness of such conduct; while just now how great was the difference! I had inquired of my husband if he were going out, to which he mournfully replied that he had no intention of so doing, but should pass the evening alone, as he most frequently did. Ah, my lord, could you but have seen his surprise when I offered to be his companion, and how suddenly did the gloomy expression of his features give place to a bright glow of happiness! Ah, you were quite right, there is nothing more really delightful than preparing happy surprises for those around us."

"But how could so much kindness on your part have brought about the painful conversation you were alluding to just now?"

"Alas, my lord!" said Clémence, blushing deeply, "M. d'Harville, not satisfied with the hopes I felt myself justified in holding out, allowed himself to form others of a nature too tender to admit of their being realised, and in proportion to my consciousness of my utter inability to respond to such sentiments had been my anxiety not to arouse them; and, greatly as I had felt touched by the warmth of my husband's gratitude for my proffered affection, I was even still more terrified and alarmed by the passionate ardour of his manner and expressions; and when, carried away by the impetuosity of his feelings, he pressed his lips upon my hand, a cold shudder pervaded my whole frame, and I found it impossible to conceal the disgust and alarm I experienced. Doubtless this manifestation of my invincible repugnance pained him deeply, and I much lament having been unable to prevent his perceiving my feelings. But now that the blow has fallen, it will, at least, serve to

convince M. d'Harville of the utter impossibility of my ever being more to him than the most tender and devoted friend."

"I pity him most sincerely, without being able to blame you in the slightest degree for the part you have acted. There are certain feelings which must ever be held sacred. But poor Albert! With his noble, generous spirit, his frank, confiding nature, his warm, enthusiastic heart,—if you only knew how long I have been vainly trying to discover the cause of the hidden melancholy which was evidently preying upon his health. Well, we must trust to the soothing effects of time and reason. By degrees he will become more sensible of the value of the affection you offer him, and he will resign himself as he did before, when he had not the consolatory hopes you now present to his view."

"Hopes which I solemnly assure you, my lord, it is my fixed determination to realise in their fullest extent."

"And now let us turn our attention to others who are also called upon to suffer and taste of heavy sorrows. You know I promised to occupy you in a charitable work, which should have all the charm of a romance of real life; and I am here to perform my promise."

"What, already, my lord? Indeed, you rejoice me greatly."

"It was a most fortunate idea of mine to hire the small chamber I told you of in the Rue du Temple; you can scarcely imagine all the curious and interesting objects it has made me acquainted with. In the first place your poor protégés in the garrets are now enjoying that happiness your presence secured to them. They have still some severe trials to undergo; but I will not enter upon the painful details at the present moment. One of these days you shall learn how many direful evils may be heaped upon one unfortunate family."

"How grateful they must feel towards you!"

"Nay, 'tis your name is ever on their lips, loaded with praises and blessings."

"Ah, my lord, is it then in my name you have succoured them?"

"To increase the value of the gift, I confess I did presume to name you as their benefactress. Besides, what have I done more than carry out your promises?"

"I cannot allow of even this pious fraud, and to-morrow they shall learn from me whom they have to thank. I will tell them the extent of their obligations to you."

"Oh, pray do no such thing, or you will spoil all my fine schemes. Remember that I have a small apartment in the house; that for the sake of much good I hope to effect, I am anxious to preserve a strict *incognito* there. Recollect, also, that the Morels are now beyond the reach of further distress; and, finally, let me remind you that there are other claimants for your benevolence. And now for the subject of our present intrigue. I want your generous aid and assistance in behalf of a mother and daughter, who from former affluence are at this moment reduced to the most abject penury, in consequence of having been most villainously despoiled of their just rights."

"Poor things! And where do these unfortunate beings reside, my lord?"

"I do not know."

"Then how did you become acquainted with their misfortunes?"

"Yesterday I was at the Temple, — perhaps, Madame la Marquise, you do not know what sort of place the Temple is?"

"Indeed, my lord, I do not."

"It is a bazaar of the most amusing description. Well, I went there for the purpose of making several purchases in company with a female lodger who occupies an apartment adjoining my own — "

"Indeed! A female neighbour?"

"Yes, my next-door neighbour on the fourth floor. Don't you recollect I told you I had a chamber in the Rue du Temple?"

"Pardon me, my lord, I had quite forgotten that circumstance."

"I must tell you that this same neighbour is one of the prettiest little mantua-makers you ever saw. She is called Rigolette, is for ever laughing, and never was in love."

"Upon my word, a most uncommon specimen of her class!"

"She even admits that her indifference to the tender passion arises less from prudence than because she has not time to think about love or lovers, both of which she says would take up too much of her time; as, working from twelve to fifteen hours daily, it is with difficulty she manages to earn twenty-five sous a day, yet on that trifling sum she lives contentedly."

"Is it possible?"

"Possible! Why, she even launches out into luxuries, — has a couple of birds, who consume as much food as herself, arranges her chamber with the most scrupulous and pretty neatness, while her dress would make a modern belle grow pale with envy."

"And all this effected upon five and twenty sous a day? It is almost difficult to believe it."

"I assure you my fair neighbour is a pattern of industry, order, economy, and practical philosophy; and as such I beg to recommend her to your notice in her capacity of dressmaker, in which she is reported to have much skill. If you will honour her with your commands, her fortune will be surely made; although there is no occasion for your carrying your beneficence so far as to wear the dresses you permit her to make."

"Oh, I will take care to give her employment imme-

diately. Poor girl! living honestly and contentedly upon a sum squandered by the rich for the most trifling whim or caprice."

"Well, now then that you have undertaken to interest yourself in my deserving young neighbour, let us proceed to the little adventure I was about to relate to you. I went, as I told you, to the Temple with Mlle. Rigolette in order to purchase many articles necessary for the comfort of the poor family in the garret, when, accidentally examining the drawers of an old *secrétaire* exposed for sale, I found the fragment of a letter in a female hand, in which the writer bitterly deplored the destitution to which herself and daughter were exposed in consequence of the villainy of the person in whose hands their money had been placed. I inquired of the mistress of the shop how she became possessed of the piece of furniture in question. She told me it was part of a lot of very common household goods she purchased of a person still young, who had evidently disposed of all her effects from stern necessity, and being without any other means of raising money. Both mother and daughter, continued my informant, seemed much superior to their condition, and each bore their distress with a proud yet calm fortitude."

"And do you not know where these poor ladies can be found, my lord?"

"I do not, unfortunately, at the present moment, but I have given directions to M. de Graün to use every effort to discover them, and, if needs must be, even to apply to the police for assistance. It is just probable that the unfortunate parent and child, finding themselves stripped of their little stock of furniture, may have sought refuge in some obscure lodging; and if so, there is every chance of discovering their abode, since the keepers of lodging-houses are obliged to write a daily report of every fresh inmate they receive."

"What a singular combination of events!" said

Madame d'Harville, much astonished: "Your account is, indeed, a most interesting one."

"You have not heard all yet. In a corner of the fragment of writing found in the old *secrétaire*, are these words, 'To write to Madame de Lucenay.'"

"Oh, how fortunate!" exclaimed Madame d'Harville, with much animation. "No doubt the duchess can tell me all about these unfortunate ladies. But then," added she, thoughtfully, "I do not see, after all, how we shall be able to describe them, as we do not even know their name."

"Nay, it will be easy to inquire whether she is acquainted with a widow still in the prime of life, whose air and manner indicate her being far superior to her present circumstances, and who has a daughter about sixteen years of age named Claire. I am sure it was Claire the woman told me the younger female was called."

"How very strange! That is my child's name; and furnishes an additional reason for my interesting myself in their misfortunes."

"I forgot to tell you that the brother of this unhappy widow died by his own hands a very few months ago."

Madame d'Harville was silent for some minutes, as though reflecting deeply; at length she said:

"If Madame de Lucenay be in any way acquainted with this unfortunate family, these particulars will be quite sufficient to identify them; besides which the lamentable end of the brother must have fixed every circumstance connected with them more strongly in her memory. How impatient I feel to question the duchess on the subject! I will write her a note this very evening, begging of her not to go out to-morrow till I have seen her. Who can these interesting people be? From your account, my lord, I should say they certainly belong to the higher class of society, and must, therefore, feel their present distress so much the more

keenly. Alas, to such as they the falling into such utter destitution must inflict a deeper, keener sting!"

"And all their sufferings have arisen from the knavery of an unprincipled scoundrel, — a notary, named Jacques Ferrand. But I am in possession of other acts of villainy on his part equally black with this."

"That is the name of the person acting as the legal adviser both of my husband and mother-in-law," exclaimed Clémence; "and, indeed, my lord, I think you must be mistaken in your opinion of him, for he is universally regarded as a person of the strictest honour and probity."

"I assure you I have the most irrefragable proofs of what I assert. Meanwhile let me beg of you to be perfectly silent as to the character I assign this man, who is as subtle as unprincipled; and the better to unmask his nefarious practices, it is necessary he should be allowed to think himself secure from all danger; a few days will enable me to perfect my schemes for bringing him to a severe reckoning. He it was who brought such unmerited affliction upon the interesting females I have been telling you of, by defrauding them of a large sum, which, it appears, was consigned to his care by the brother of the unfortunate widow."

"And this money?"

"Was their sole dependence."

"This is, indeed, a crime of the most heinous description!"

"'Tis, indeed, of blackest die," exclaimed Rodolph, "having nothing to extenuate it, and originating neither in passion nor necessity. The pangs of hunger will often instigate a man to commit a theft, the thirst for revenge lead on to murder; but this legal hypocrite is passing rich, and invested, by common consent, with a character of almost priestly sanctity, while his countenance and manners are moulded with such studious art as to inspire

and command universal confidence. The assassin kills you at a blow, — this villain tortures, prolongs your sufferings, and leaves you, after the death-blow has been inflicted, to sink under the gnawing agonies of want, misery, and despair. Nothing is safe from the cupidity of such a man as Ferrand: the inheritance of the orphan, the hard-earned savings of the laborious poor, — all excite alike his unprincipled avarice; and that which in other men arises out of the impulse of the moment is with this wretch the result of a cold and unrelenting calculation. You entrust him with your wealth, — to see it is to covet it, and with him to desire is to possess himself, without the smallest scruple. Totally unheeding your future wretchedness, the grasping deceiver deprives you of your property, and without a pang consigns you to beggary and destitution. Suppose that, by a long course of labour and privations, you have contrived to amass a provision against the wants and infirmities of old age; well, no sooner is this cold-blooded hypocrite made the depositary of your little treasure, than he unhesitatingly appropriates it, leaving you to drag on a miserable existence, without a morsel of bread but such as the hand of charity doles out to you. Nor is this all. Let us consider the fearful consequences of these infamous acts of spoliation. Take the case of the widow of whom we were speaking just now, — imagine her dying of grief and a crushed spirit, the results of her heavy afflictions; she leaves a young and helpless girl to struggle alone in the world, — a weak and delicate being, whose very loveliness increases her dangers and difficulties. Without friends or support, unaccustomed to the rough realities of life, the poor orphan has but to choose between starvation and dishonour. In an evil hour she falls, and becomes a lost, degraded creature. And thus Jacques Ferrand, by his dishonest appropriation of the things committed to his charge, occasions not only the death of the mother, but the dishonour of the child; he destroys the body of

the one and the soul of the other, — and again, I say, not with the merciful despatch of the assassin's dagger, but by the slow tortures of lingering cruelty ! "

Clémence listened in profound silence, not unmixed with surprise, at hearing Rodolph express himself with so much indignation and bitterness. Accustomed only to witness the most urbane suavity in the tone and manner of her guest, she felt more than ordinarily struck by his vehement and excited language; which, however, seemed to show his intense abhorrence of all crooked and nefarious dealings.

" I must entreat your pardon, madame," said the prince, after a pause, " for having permitted myself to use so much warmth in the presence of a lady ; but, in truth, I could not restrain my indignation when I reflected on all the horrible dangers which may overwhelm your future protégées. But, be assured, it is quite impossible to exaggerate those fearful consequences brought about by ruin and misery."

" Indeed ! Indeed, my lord, you rather merit my thanks, for having so powerfully and energetically augmented, if possible, the tender pity I feel for this unfortunate parent, whose heart is, doubtless, wrung with anguish rather for her young and innocent daughter than for herself. It is, in truth, a fearful situation. But we shall soon be enabled to relieve her mind, and rescue her from her present misery, shall we not, my lord ? Oh, yes, I feel assured we shall, — and henceforward their happiness shall be my care. I am rich, — though not so much so as I could wish, now that I perceive how worthily wealth may be employed ; but should there be occasion for further aid than I am enabled to afford, I will apply to M. d'Harville in their behalf. I will render him so happy, that he shall find it impossible to refuse any of my new caprices, and I foresee that I shall have plenty of them. You told me, did you not, my lord, that our protégées are proud ? So much the

better. I am better pleased to find them so; for pride under unmerited misfortune always betokens a great and elevated mind. But I shall be able to overreach them, for I will so contrive that they shall be relieved from their present misery without ever guessing to what channel they owe their deliverance from misery. You think I shall find it difficult to deceive them? So much the better. Oh, I have my own plans of action, I can assure you, my lord; and you will see that I shall be deficient neither in cunning nor address."

"I fully anticipate the most Machiavelian system of ruse and deep combination," said Rodolph, smiling.

"But we must, first of all, discover where they are. Oh, how I wish to-morrow were come! When I leave Madame de Lucenay, I shall go directly to their old residence, make inquiries of their late neighbours, collect all the information I can, and form my own conclusions from all I see and hear. I should feel so proud and delighted to work out all the good I intend to these poor ladies, without being assisted by any person; and I shall accomplish it, — I feel sure I shall. This adventure affects me greatly. Poor things! I seem even to feel a livelier interest in their misfortunes when I think of my own child."

Deeply touched at this charitable warmth, Rodolph smiled with sincere commiseration at seeing a young creature of scarcely twenty years of age, seeking to lose, amid occupations so pure and noble, the sense of the severe domestic afflictions which bore so heavily upon her. The eyes of Clémence sparkled with enthusiasm, a delicate carnation tinged her pale cheek, while the animation of her words and gestures imparted additional beauty to her lovely countenance.

The close and silent scrutiny of Rodolph did not escape the notice of Madame d'Harville. She blushed, looked down for a few minutes, then, raising her eyes in sweet confusion, said:

"I see, my lord, you are amused at my girlish eagerness. But, in truth, I am impatient to taste those sources of delight which are about to gild an existence hitherto so replete with grief and sadness, and, unfortunately, so useless to every one. Alas, this was not the life my early dreams had pictured to me, — the one great passion of life I must for ever renounce! Though young, I must live, and act, and think, as though scores of years had passed over my head. Alas, alas!" continued Clémence, with a sigh, "to me is denied the dear domestic joys my heart could so fondly have prized." After a minute's pause she resumed: "But why should I dwell on such vain and fruitless regrets? Thanks to you, my lord, charity will replace the void left in my heart by disappointed affection. Already have I owed to your counsels the enjoyment of the most touching emotions. Your words, my lord, affect me deeply, and exercise unbounded influence over me. The more I meditate on what you have advanced, the more I search into its real depth and value, the more I am struck by its vast power and truth, the more just and valuable does it appear to me. Then, when I reflect that, not satisfied with sympathising with sufferings of which you can form no idea from actual experience, you aid me with the most salutary counsels, and guide me, step by step, in the new and delightful path of virtue and goodness pointed out by you to relieve a weary and worn-out heart, oh, my lord, what treasure of all that is good must your mind contain! From what source have you drawn so large a supply of tender pity for the woes of all?"

"Nay, the secret of my sincere commiseration with the woes of others consists in my having deeply suffered myself, — nay, in still sighing over heavy sorrows none can alleviate or cure."

"You, my lord! Surely you cannot have tasted thus bitterly of grief and misfortune?"

"Yes, 'tis even so. I sometimes think that I have been made to taste of nearly every bitter which fills our cup of worldly sorrows, the better to fit me for sympathising with all descriptions of worldly trials. Wounded and sorely afflicted as a friend, a husband, and a parent, what grief can there be in which I am not qualified to participate?"

"I always understood, my lord, that your late wife, the grand duchess, left no child?"

"True; but, before I became her husband, I was the father of a daughter, who died quite young. And, however you may smile at the idea, I can with truth assert that the loss of that child has poisoned all my subsequent days. And this grief increases with my years. Each succeeding hour but redoubles the poignancy of my regrets, which, far from abating, appear to grow,—strengthen, even as my daughter would have done had she been spared me. She would now have been in her seventeenth year."

"And her mother," asked Clémence, after a trifling hesitation, "is she still living?"

"Oh, name her not, I beseech you!" exclaimed Rodolph, whose features became suddenly overcast at this reference to Sarah. "She to whom you allude is a vile, unworthy woman, whose feelings are completely buried beneath the cold selfishness and ambition of her nature. Sometimes I even ask myself whether it is not better that my child has been removed by death than for her to have been contaminated by the example of such a mother."

Clémence could not restrain a feeling of satisfaction at hearing Rodolph thus express himself. "In that case," said she, "I can imagine how doubly you must bewail the loss of your only object of affection!"

"Oh, how I should have doted on my child! For it seems to me that, among princes, there is always mixed up with the affection we bear a son, a sort of interested

regard for the being destined to perpetuate our race, — a kind of political calculation. But a daughter! — oh, she is loved for herself alone! And when, alas! one is weary of witnessing the many fearful pictures of fallen humanity an intercourse with the world compels us to behold, what joy to turn from the dark pictures of guilt and crime to refresh ourselves by the contemplation of a young and innocent mind, and to delight in watching the unfolding of all those pure and tender feelings so guilelessly true to nature! The proudest, the happiest mother feels not half the exquisite joy of a father in observing the gradual development of a daughter's character. A mother will dwell with far greater rapture on the bold and manly qualities of a son. For have you never remarked that the cause which still further cements the doting affection of a mother for her son, or a father for his daughter, is the feeling of either requiring or bestowing aid and protection? Thus, the mother looks upon her son in the light of a future support and protection; while the father beholds in his young and helpless daughter a weak and fragile creature, clinging to him for safety, counsel, and protection from all the storms of life."

"True, my lord, — most true!"

"But what avails it thus to dwell on sources of delight for ever lost to me?" cried Rodolph, in a voice of the deepest dejection. His mournful tones sunk into the very heart of Clémence, who could not restrain a tear, which trickled slowly down her cheek. After a short pause, during which the prince, making a powerful effort to restrain himself, and feeling almost ashamed of allowing his feelings thus to get the better of him in the presence of Madame d'Harville, said, with a smile of infinite sadness, "Your pardon, madame, for thus allowing myself to be drawn away by the remembrance of my past griefs!"

"I beseech you, my lord, make no apology to me;

but, on the contrary, believe that I most sincerely sympathise with your very natural regrets. Have I not a right to share your griefs, for have I not made you a participator in mine? My greatest pain is, that the only consolation I could offer you would be vain and useless to assuage your grief."

"Not so; the very expression of your kind commiseration is grateful and beneficial to me; and I find it a relief to disburden my mind, and tell you all I suffer. But, courage!" added Rodolph, with a faint and melancholy smile; "the conversation of this evening entirely reassures me on your account. A safe and healthful path is opened to you, by following which you will escape the trials and dangers so fatal to many of your sex, and, still more so, for those as highly endowed as yourself. You will have much to endure, to struggle against, and contend with; but in proportion to the difficulties of your position will be your merit in overcoming them. You are too young and lovely to escape without a severe ordeal; but, should your courage ever fail you, the recollection, not only of the good you have done, but also that you propose to effect, will serve to strengthen your virtuous resolutions, and arm you with fresh courage."

Madame d'Harville melted into tears.

"At least," said she, "promise me your counsels and advice shall never fail me. May I depend on this, my lord?"

"Indeed, indeed, you may. Whether near or afar off, believe that I shall ever feel the most lively interest in your welfare and well-doing; and, so far as in me lies, will I devote my best services to promote your happiness, or that of the man whom I glory in calling my dearest friend."

"Thanks, my lord," said Clémence, drying her tears, "for this consoling promise. But for your generous aid, I feel too well that my own strength would fail me.

Still I bind myself now, and in your presence, faithfully and courageously to perform my duty, however hard or painful that duty may be."

As Clémence uttered these last words, a small door, concealed by the hangings, suddenly opened; and M. d'Harville, pale, agitated, and evidently labouring under considerable excitement, appeared before Madame d'Harville and Rodolph. The latter involuntarily started, while a faint cry escaped the lips of the astonished wife.

The first surprise over, the marquis handed to Rodolph the letter received from Sarah, saying:

"Here, my lord, is the letter I but just now received in your presence. Have the kindness to cast your eyes over it, and afterwards commit it to the flames."

Clémence gazed on her husband with utter astonishment.

"Most infamous!" exclaimed Rodolph, indignantly, as he finished the perusal of the vile scrawl.

"Nay, my lord, there is an act more dastardly even than the sending an anonymous letter; and that act I have committed."

"For the love of heaven, explain yourself!"

"Instead of at once fearlessly and candidly showing you this letter, I concealed its contents from you. I feigned calmness and tranquillity, while jealousy, rage, and despair filled my heart. Nor is this all. To what detestable meanness do you suppose, my lord, my ungoverned passions led me? Why, to enact the part of a spy, — to hide myself basely and contemptibly behind this door, to overhear your conversation and espy your actions. Yes, hate me, despise me as you will, I merit all for having insulted you by a suspicion. Oh, the writer of these fiendish letters knew well the culpable weakness of him to whom they were addressed. But, after all I have heard, — for not a word has escaped me, and I now know the nature of the interest which attracts you to frequent the Rue du Temple, — after having, by my

mean and unworthy jealousy, given support to the base calumny by believing it even for an instant, how can I hope for pardon, though I sue for it upon my knees? Still, still, I venture to implore from you, so superior to myself in nobleness and generosity of soul, pity, and, if you can, forgiveness for the wrong I have done you!"

"No more of this, my dear Albert," said Rodolph, extending his hands towards his friend with the most touching cordiality; "you have nothing to ask pardon for. Indeed, I feel quite delighted to find you have discovered the secrets of Madame d'Harville and myself. Now that all further restraint is at an end, I shall be able to lecture you as much and as frequently as I choose. But, what is better still, you are now installed as the confidant of Madame d'Harville, — that is to say, you now know what to expect from a heart so pure, so generous, and so noble as hers."

"And you, Clémence," said M. d'Harville, sorrowfully, to his wife, "can you forgive me my last unworthy act, in addition to the just causes you already have to hate and despise me?"

"On one condition," said she, extending her hand towards her husband, which he warmly and tenderly pressed, "that you promise to aid me in all my schemes for promoting and securing your happiness!"

"Upon my word, my dear marquis," exclaimed Rodolph, "our enemies have shown themselves bunglers after all! They have afforded you an opportunity you might never otherwise have obtained, of rightly appreciating the tender devotion of your incomparable wife, whose affection for you, I venture to say, has shone out more brightly and steadily under the machinations of those who seek to render us miserable, than amidst all the former part of your wedded life; so that we are enabled to take a sweet revenge for the mischief intended to be effected: that is some consolation, while awaiting a fuller atonement for this diabolical attempt.

I strongly suspect the quarter from which this scheme has emanated; and however patiently I may bear my own wrongs, I am not of a nature to suffer those offered to my friends to remain unpunished. This, however, is my affair. Adieu, madame,—our intrigue is discovered; and you will be no more at liberty to work alone in befriending your protégées. But, never mind! Before long we will get up some mysterious enterprise, impossible to be found out; and we will even defy the marquis, with all his penetration, to know more than we choose to tell him."

After accompanying Rodolph to his carriage with reiterated thanks and praises, the marquis retired to his apartments without again seeing Clémence.

CHAPTER VII.

REFLECTIONS.

It would be difficult to describe the tumultuous and opposing sentiments that agitated M. d'Harville when alone. He reflected with delight on the detection of the unworthy falsehood charged upon Rodolph and Clémence; but he was, at the same time, thoroughly convinced that he must for ever forego the hope of being loved by her. The more Clémence had proved herself, in her conversation with Rodolph, resigned, full of courage, and bent on acting rightly, the more bitterly did M. d'Harville reproach himself for having, in his culpable egotism, chained the lot of his unhappy young wife to his own. Far from being consoled by the conversation he had overheard, he fell into a train of sorrowful thought and indescribable anguish.

Riches, without occupation, bring with them this wretchedness. Nothing can divert it, nothing relieve it, from the deepest feelings of mental torture. Not being compulsorily preoccupied by cares for the future or daily toil, it is utterly exposed to heavy moral affliction. Able to acquire all that money can purchase, it desires or regrets with intense violence —

"What gold could never buy."

The mental torture of M. d'Harville was intense, for, after all, what he desired was only what was just, and actually legal, — the society, if not the love, of his wife.

But, when placed beside the inexorable refusal of

Clémence, he asked himself if there was not the bitterest derision in these words of the law: The wife belongs to her husband.

To what influence, to what means could he have recourse to subdue this coldness, this repugnance, which turned his whole existence into one long punishment, since he could not — ought not — would not love any woman but his wife?

He could not but see in this, as in many other positions of conjugal life, the simple will of the husband or the wife imperatively substituted, without appeal or possibility of prevention, for the sovereign will of the law.

To the paroxysms of vain anger there succeeded a melancholy depression. The future weighed him down, heavy, dull, and chill. He only saw before him the grief that would doubtless render more frequent the attacks of his fearful malady.

"Oh," he exclaimed, at once in tears and despair, "it is my fault, — it is my fault! Poor, unhappy girl! I deceived her, — shamefully deceived her! She must, — she ought to hate me; and yet but now she displayed the deepest interest in me, and, instead of contenting myself with that, my mad passion led me away, and I became tender. I spoke of my love, and scarcely had my lips touched her hand than she became startled, and bounded with fright. If I could for a moment have doubted the invincible repugnance with which I inspire her, what she said to the prince must for ever destroy that illusion. Ah, it is frightful, — frightful! By what right has she confided to him this hideous secret? It is an unworthy betrayal! By what right? — alas, by the right the victim has to complain of its executioner! Poor girl! So young, — so loving! All she could find most cruel to say against the horrid existence I have entailed upon her was, that such was not the lot of which she had dreamed, and that she was very young to renounce all hopes of love! I know Clémence, and the word she

gave me, — the word she gave to the prince, — she will abide by for ever. She will be to me the tenderest of sisters! Well, is not my position still most enviable? To the cold and constrained demeanour which existed between us will succeed affectionate and gentle intercourse, whilst she might have treated me always with icy disdain of which it was impossible that I could complain. So, then, I will console myself by the enjoyment of what she offers to me. Shall I not be too happy then? — too happy? Ah, how weak I am! How cowardly! Is she not my wife, after all? Is she not mine and mine only? Does not the law recognise my right over her? My wife refuses, but is not the right on my side?" he interrupted himself, with a burst of sardonic laughter.

"Oh, yes, — be violent, eh? What, another infamy? But what can I do? For I love her yet, — love her to madness! I love her and her only! I want but her, — her love, and not the lukewarm regard of a sister. Ah, at last she must have pity; she is so kind, and she will see how unhappy I am! But no, no! Never! Mine is a case of estrangement which a woman never can surmount. Disgust, — yes, disgust, — I cannot but see it, — disgust! I must convince myself that it is my horrid infirmity that frightens her, and always must, — always must!" exclaimed M. d'Harville, in his fearful excitement.

After a moment of gloomy silence, he continued:

"This anonymous attack, which accused the prince and my wife, comes from the hand of an enemy; and yet, but an hour ago, before I saw through it, I suspected him. Him! — to believe him capable of such base treachery! And my wife, too, I included in the same suspicion! Ah, jealousy is incurable! And yet I must not abuse myself. If the prince, who loves me as his best and dearest friend, has made Clémence promise to occupy her mind and heart in charitable works, if he promises her his advice, his support, it is because she requires advice, needs sup-

port. And, indeed, lovely and young, and surrounded as she is, and without that love in her heart which protects and even almost excuses her wrongs through mine, which are so atrocious, must she not fall? Another torturing thought! What I have suffered when I thought her guilty, — fallen, — Heaven knows what agony! But, no; the fear is vain! Clémence has sworn never to fail in her duties, and she will keep her promise, — strictly keep it! But at what a price! At what a price! But now, when she turned towards me with affectionate language, what agony did I feel at the sight of her gentle, sad, and resigned smile! How much this return to me must have cost! Poor love! how lovely and affecting she seemed at that moment! For the first time I felt a fierce remorse, for, up to that moment, her haughty coldness had sufficiently avenged her. Oh, wretch! — wretch that I am!"

After a long and sleepless night, spent in bitter reflections, the agitation of M. d'Harville ceased, as if by enchantment. He had come to an unalterable resolution. He awaited daybreak with excessive impatience.

Early in the morning he rang for his *valet de chambre.*

When old Joseph entered his master's room, to his great surprise he heard him hum a hunting song, — a sign, as rare as certain, that M. d'Harville was in good humour.

"Ah, M. le Marquis," said the faithful old servant, quite affected, "what a charming voice you have! What a pity that you do not sing more frequently!"

"Really, Joseph, have I a charming voice?" said M. d'Harville, smiling.

"If M. le Marquis had a voice as hoarse as a night raven or as harsh as a rattle, I should still think he had a charming voice."

"Be silent, you flatterer!"

"Why, when you sing, M. le Marquis, it is a sign you are happy, and then your voice sounds to me the most beautiful music in the world."

"In that case, Joseph, my old friend, prepare to open your long ears."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"You may enjoy every day the music which you call charming, and of which you seem so fond."

"What! You will be happy every day, M. le Marquis?" exclaimed Joseph, clasping his hands with extreme delight.

"Every day, my old Joseph, happy every day. Yes, no more sorrow, — no more sadness. I can tell you, the only and discreet confidant of my troubles, that I am at the height of happiness. My wife is an angel of goodness, and has asked my forgiveness for her past estrangement, attributing it (can you imagine?) to jealousy."

"To jealousy?"

"Yes, absurd suspicions, excited by anonymous letters."

"How shameful!"

"You understand? Women have so much self-love, — a little more and we should have been separated; but, fortunately, last evening she explained all frankly to me, and I disabused her mind. To tell you her extreme delight would be impossible, for she loves me, — oh, yes, she loves me! The coldness she evinced towards me lay as cruelly on herself as on me, and now, at length, our distressing separation has ended. Only conceive my delight!"

"Can it be true?" cried Joseph, with tears in his eyes. "Can it really be true, M. le Marquis? And now your life will be happy, for it was only my lady's love that you required, or, rather, since her estrangement was your sole misery, as you told me."

"And to whom but you should I have told it, my

worthy old Joseph? Do not you possess, also, a still sadder secret? But do not let us say anything more of sorrows now, — it is too bright a time. You see, perhaps, that I have been weeping? It is because this happiness has come over me so suddenly, when I so little anticipated it! How weak I am! — am I not?"

"Well, well, M. le Marquis, you may weep for joy as much as you please, for you have wept long enough for pain; and now see, do not I do as you do? They are right sort of tears, and I would not give them for ten years more of life. I have now but one fear, and that is, not to be able to prevent myself from falling at the feet of Madame la Marquise the first time I see her."

"Silly old fellow! Why you are as weak as your master. And now I have but one fear."

"And what is that?"

"That this will not last; I am too happy. What now is wanting to me?"

"Nothing, — nothing, M. le Marquis, — absolutely nothing."

"That is why I mistrust such perfect happiness, — too complete."

"Alas! If that is all, why, M. le Marquis — But no, I dare not."

"I understand you. Well, I believe your fears are vain. The change which my happiness causes me is so intense, so complete, that I am almost sure of being nearly cured."

"How?"

"My doctor has told me a hundred times that a violent emotion is frequently sufficient either to bring on or to cure this terrible malady."

"You are right, monsieur, — you are cured, and what a blessing that is! Ah, as you say, M. le Marquis, the marquise is a good angel come down from heaven; and I begin myself to be almost alarmed lest the happiness is too great; but now I think of it, if you only want

a small matter just to annoy you, thank God, I have just the very thing!"

"What is it?"

"One of your friends has very luckily had a sword-wound, very slight, to be sure; but that's all the same, it is quite enough for you, as you desire to make a small black spot in your too happy day."

"What do you mean, and of whom do you speak?"

"The Duke de Lucenay."

"Is he wounded?"

"A scratch in the arm. M. the Duke came yesterday to call on you, sir, and told me he should come again this morning, and invite himself to a cup of tea."

"Poor Lucenay! And why did you not tell me this?"

"I could not see you last night, M. le Marquis."

After a moment's reflection, M. d'Harville resumed:

"You are right, this slight regret will, doubtless, satisfy jealous Fate. But an idea has come across me; I should like to get up a bachelors' breakfast this morning of all the friends of M. de Lucenay, to celebrate the fortunate result of his duel; not anticipating such a meeting, he will be delighted."

"A capital idea, M. le Marquis. *Vive la joie!* Let us make up for lost time. For how many shall I desire the *maître d'hôtel* to lay covers?"

"For six, in the small winter dining-room."

"And the invitations?"

"I will write them. Let a groom get his horse ready, and take them instantly. It is very early, and he will find everybody at home. Ring."

Joseph rang the bell.

M. d'Harville entered into his cabinet, and wrote the following letter, with no other alteration than the name of each invited guest.

"My dear ——: This is a circular, and is also an impromptu. Lucenay is coming to breakfast with me this morning, expecting

only a *tête-à-tête*. Will you join me and several friends, whom I also invite, in giving him an agreeable surprise?

"Twelve punctually. "M. D'HARVILLE."

A servant entered.

"Desire some one to get on horseback, and deliver these notes directly," said M. d'Harville; and then, addressing Joseph, "Write the addresses: M. le Vicomte de Saint-Remy, — Lucenay cannot get on without him," said M. d'Harville to himself; "M. de Monville, one of the duke's travelling companions; Lord Douglas, his beloved partner at whist; the Baron de Sézannes, one of the friends of his childhood. Have you done?"

"Yes, M. le Marquis."

"Send them off, then, without losing a minute's time," said M. d'Harville.

"Ah, Philippe, request M. Doublet to come and speak to me."

Philippe left the room.

"Well, what is the matter with you?" inquired M. d'Harville of Joseph, who looked at him with astonishment.

"I cannot get over it, sir; I never saw you in such spirits, — so lively; and then you, who are usually so pale, have got such a colour, and your eyes sparkle."

"Happiness, my old friend, — happiness, and nothing else; and you must assist me in my little plot. You must go and learn of Mlle. Juliette, Madame d'Harville's waiting-woman, who has the care of her diamonds."

"Yes, M. le Marquis, it is Mlle. Juliette who has the charge of them, for it is not eight days since I helped her to clean them."

"Ask her to tell you the name of her lady's jeweller, but not to say a word on the subject to her mistress."

"Ah, I understand, — a surprise."

"Go as quickly as possible. Here is M. Doublet."

And the steward entered as Joseph quitted the apartment.

"I have the honour to attend the orders of M. le Marquis."

"My dear M. Doublet, I am going to alarm you," said M. d'Harville, smiling; "I shall compel you to utter fearful cries of distress."

"Me, sir?"

"You."

"I will endeavour to give satisfaction to M. le Marquis."

"I am going to spend an enormous sum, M. Doublet."

"Why not, M. le Marquis? We are well able to do so."

"I have been planning a considerable extent of building. I propose to annex a gallery in the garden, on the right wing of the hôtel. After having hesitated at this folly, of which I have not before spoken to you, I have made up my mind on the point, and I wish you to send to-day to my architect, desiring him to come and talk over the plans with me. Well, M. Doublet, you do not seem to object to the outlay."

"I can assure your lordship that I have no objection whatsoever."

"This gallery is destined for fêtes, and I wish to have it erected as though by enchantment; and, as enchantments are very dear, we must sell fifteen or twenty thousand livres of income in order to meet the expenditure, for I wish the work to be begun as speedily as possible."

"I have always said there is nothing which M. le Marquis wants, unless it be a certain taste. That for building has the advantage of having the buildings always left; as to money, M. le Marquis need not alarm himself, and he may, if he pleases, build the gallery."

Joseph returned.

"Here, M. le Marquis, is the address of the jeweller, whose name is M. Baudoin," said he to M. d'Harville.

"My dear M. Doublet, will you go to this jeweller's, and desire him to bring here in an hour a river of diamonds, worth, say, two thousand louis? Women never have too many jewels, now they wear gowns decorated with them. You can arrange with the jeweller as to the payment."

"Yes, M. le Marquis; and I do not even yet begin to groan. Diamonds are like buildings, — they remain. And then, no doubt, the surprise will greatly please Madame la Marquise, without counting the pleasure that you yourself will experience. It is as I had the honour of saying the other day, there is not in the world any person whose existence can be more delightful than that of M. le Marquis."

"My dear M. Doublet," said M. d'Harville, with a smile, "your congratulations are always so peculiarly apropos."

"That is their only merit, M. le Marquis; and they possess that merit, perhaps, because they proceed from the heart. I will run to the jeweller."

As soon as he was alone, M. d'Harville began to pace up and down his cabinet, with his arms folded, and his eye fixed and meditative. His features suddenly changed, and no longer expressed that somewhat feverish contentment of which the steward and his old servant had been the dupes, but assumed a calm, sad, and chilling resolution. Afterwards, having paced up and down for a short time, he sunk into a chair heavily, and, as though weighed down with sorrow, placed his elbows on his desk, and hid his face in his hands. After a moment he rose suddenly, wiped a tear which moistened his red eyelid, and said with effort:

"Come, come! Courage, courage!"

He then wrote to several persons on very trifling matters, and postponed various meetings for some days. The

marquis had concluded this correspondence when Joseph again entered, so gay, and so forgetful of himself, as to hum a tune in his turn.

"M. Joseph, what a charming voice you have!" said his master, jestingly.

"*Ma foi!* so much the worse, M. le Marquis, for I don't care about it. I am singing so merrily within, that my music must be heard without."

"Send these letters to the post."

"Yes, M. le Marquis; but where will you receive the gentlemen who are expected this morning?"

"Here, in my cabinet; they will smoke after breakfast, and then the smell of the tobacco will not reach Madame d'Harville."

At this moment the noise of carriage wheels was heard in the courtyard of the hôtel.

"It is Madame la Marquise going out; she ordered her carriage very early this morning," said Joseph.

"Run and request her to be so kind and come here before she goes out."

"Yes, M. le Marquis."

The domestic had scarcely left the room when M. d'Harville approached a mirror, and looked at himself attentively.

"Well, well," said he, in a hoarse voice, "it is there, — the flushed cheeks — the bright look — joy or fever, it is little consequence which, so that they are deceived; now, then, for the smile on the lips, — there are so many sorts of smiles! But who can distinguish the false from the true? Who can peep beneath the false mask, and say, 'That laugh hides a dark despair, that noisy gaiety conceals a thought of death?' Who could guess that? No one, — fortunately, no one, — no one! Ah, yes, love would never be mistaken; his instinct would enlighten him. But I hear my wife, — my wife! Now, then, sinister actor, play thy part."

Clémence entered M. d'Harville's apartment.

"Good morrow, dear brother Albert," she said, in a tone full of sweetness. Then, observing the smiling expression of her husband's countenance, "But what is it, my dear, that gives you such a smiling air?"

"It was because, when you entered, my dear sister, I was thinking of you, and, moreover, I was under the influence of an excellent resolution."

"That does not surprise me."

"What took place yesterday, — your extreme generosity, the prince's noble conduct, — has given me much food for reflection, and I am converted, — entirely converted to your ideas."

"Indeed! That is a happy change!" exclaimed Madame d'Harville. "Ah! I was sure that, when I appealed to your heart, to your reason, you would understand me; and now I have no doubt about the future."

"Nor I either, Clémence, I assure you. Yes, since my resolution last night, the future, which seemed so vague and sombre, is singularly brightened and simplified."

"Nothing can be more natural, my dear. Now we both go towards the same end, like a brother and sister, mutually dependent on each other; at the end of our career we shall find each other what we are to-day. The feeling will be unalterable. In a word, I wish you to be happy; and you shall be, for I have resolved it there," said Clémence, placing her finger on her forehead. Then she added, with charming emphasis, lowering her hand to her heart, "No, I mistake, it is here. That is the good thought that will watch over you incessantly, and myself also; and you shall see, my brother, in what the obstinacy of a devoted heart consists."

"Dear Clémence!" said M. d'Harville with repressed emotion; then, after a moment's silence, he continued, in a gay tone:

"I sent to beg you to come here before you went out.

to tell you that I could not take tea with you this morning. I have some friends to breakfast, — a sort of impromptu, —to celebrate the fortunate result of a duel of poor Lucenay, who, by the way, was only very slightly wounded by his adversary."

Madame d'Harville blushed when she reflected on the origin of this duel, — an absurd remark addressed in her presence by the Duke de Lucenay to M. Charles Robert. It reminded her of an *erreur* of which she was ashamed, and, to escape from the pain she felt, she said to her husband:

"What a singular chance! M. de Lucenay is coming to breakfast with you, and I am going, perhaps rather indiscreetly, to invite myself this morning to Madame de Lucenay's; for I have a great deal to say to her about my two unknowns. From her, it is my intention to go to the prison of St. Lazare with Madame de Blinval, for you do not know all my projects; at this time I am intriguing to get admittance into the work-room of the young prisoner-girls."

"You are really insatiable," said M. d'Harville, with a smile; and then he added, with a painful emotion, which, despite his efforts, betrayed itself a little, "Then I shall see you no more to-day."

"Does it annoy you that I should go out so early?" asked Clémence, quickly, astonished at the tone of his voice. "If you wish it, I can put off my visit to Madame de Lucenay."

The Marquis had nearly betrayed himself, but continued, in an affectionate tone:

"Yes, my dear little sister, I am as annoyed to see you go out, as I shall be impatient to see you return, and these are faults of which I shall never be corrected."

"And you are quite right, dear; for if you did I should be very, very sorry."

The sound of a bell, announcing a visit, was now heard.

"Here is one of your guests, no doubt," said Madame d'Harville. "I leave you; but, by the way, what are you going to do in the evening? If you have no better engagement, I require you to accompany me to the Italian Opera; perhaps now you will like the music better."

"I am at your orders with the utmost pleasure."

"Are you going out by and by? Shall I see you before dinner?"

"I shall not go out; you will find me here."

"Well, then, on my return, I shall come and inquire if your bachelors' breakfast has been amusing."

"Adieu, Clémence!"

"Adieu, dear! We shall soon meet again. I leave you a clear house, and wish you may be as merry as possible. Be very gay and lively, mind."

Having cordially shaken her husband's hand, Clémence went out of one door as M. de Lucenay entered by another.

"She wished me to be as merry as possible, and bade me be gay! In the word adieu, in that last cry of my soul in its agony, in that word of complete and eternal separation, she has understood that we should meet again soon, — this evening, — and leaves me tranquilly, and with a smile! It does honour to my dissimulation. By heaven, I did not think that I was so good an actor! But here is Lucenay."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BACHELORS' BREAKFAST.

M. DE LUCENAY came into the room.

The duke's wound had been so slight, that he did not even carry his arm in a sling. His countenance was, as usual, mirthful, yet proud; his motion perpetual; and his restlessness, as usual, unconquerable. In spite of his awkwardness, his ill-timed pleasantries, and in spite of his immense nose, which gave his face a grotesque and odd character, M. de Lucenay was not, as we have already said, a vulgar person, thanks to a kind of natural dignity and bold impertinence, which never forsook him.

"How indifferent you must think me to what concerns you, my dear Henry!" said M. d'Harville, extending his hand to M. de Lucenay; "but it was only this morning that I heard of your unfortunate adventure."

"Unfortunate! Pooh — pooh, marquis! I had my money's worth, as they say. I really never laughed so in my life. The worthy M. Robert was so religiously determined to maintain that he never had a phlegmy cough, in all his life, — but you do not know! This was the cause of the duel. The other evening at the —— embassy, I asked him, before your wife and the Countess Macgregor, how his phlegmy cough was? *Inde iræ!* for, between ourselves, he had nothing of the kind; but it was all the same, and, you may suppose, to have such a thing alluded to before pretty women was very provoking."

"How foolish! Yet it is so like you! But who is this M. Robert?"

"*Ma foi!* I have not the slightest idea in the world. He is a person whom I met at the Spas; he passed by us in the winter garden at the embassy, and I called to him to play off this foolish jest, to which he gallantly replied the next day by giving me a touch with his sword-point. This is the history of our acquaintance. But let us speak no more of such follies. I have come to ask you for a cup of tea."

So saying, M. de Lucenay flung himself down full length on the sofa; after which, poking the point of his cane between the wall and the frame of a picture hanging over his head, he began to move it about, and try and balance the frame.

"I expected you, my dear Henry; and I have got up a surprise for you," said M. d'Harville.

"Ah, bah! and in what way?" exclaimed M. de Lucenay, giving to the picture a very doubtful kind of balance.

"You will unquestionably unhook that picture, and let it down on your head."

"*Pardieu!* I believe you are right. What an eagle's eye you have! But, tell me, what is this surprise of yours?"

"I have invited some of our friends to come and breakfast with us!"

"Really! Well, that is capital! Bravo, marquis,—bravissimo! ultra-bravissimo!" exclaimed M. de Lucenay, in a lusty voice, and beating the sofa cushions with his cane with all his might. "And who shall we have,—Saint-Remy? No, I recollect; he has been in the country for some days. What the devil can he be pattering about in the country in the mid-winter for?"

"Are you sure he is not in Paris?"

"Quite sure; for I wrote to him to go out with me,

and learned he was absent; and so I fell back upon Lord Douglas, and Sézannes."

"Nothing can be better; they breakfast with us."

"Bravo! bravo! bravo!" exclaimed M. de Lucenay again, with lusty lungs; and then, wriggling and twisting himself on the sofa, he accompanied his cries with a series of fishlike bounds and springs, which would have made a boatman envious. The acrobatic exercises of the Duke de Lucenay were interrupted by the arrival of M. de Saint-Remy.

"There was no occasion to ask if Lucenay was here," said the viscount, gaily; "one could hear him below stairs."

"What! Is it you, graceful sylvan, country swain,—wolf of the woods?" exclaimed the duke, in his surprise, and sitting up suddenly. "I thought you were in the country!"

"I came back yesterday; and, having this instant received D'Harville's invitation, I have hastened hither, quite delighted to make one in so pleasant a surprise." And M. de Saint-Remy extended his hand to M. de Lucenay, and then to the marquis.

"Let me thank you for your speed, my dear Saint-Remy. Is it not natural? The friends of Lucenay ought to rejoice in the fortunate result of this duel, which, after all, might have had very serious results."

"But," resumed the duke, doggedly, "what on earth have you been doing in the country in the middle of winter, Saint-Remy? It mystifies me."

"How inquisitive he is!" said the viscount, addressing M. d'Harville; and then, turning to the duke, "I am anxious to wean myself gradually from Paris, as I am soon to quit it."

"Ah, yes, the beautiful idea of attaching you to the legation from France to Gerolstein! Pray leave off those silly ideas of diplomacy! You will never go. My wife says so, everybody says the same."

"I assure you that Madame de Lucenay is mistaken, as well as all the rest of the world."

"She told you, in my presence, that it was a folly."

"How many have I committed in my life?"

"Yes, elegant, charming follies, true; — such as people said would ruin you in your Sardanapalian magnificences, — that I admit. But to go and bury yourself alive in such a court, — at Gerolstein! What an idea! Psha! It is a folly, an absurdity; and you have too much good sense to commit absurdities."

"Take care, my dear Lucenay. When you abuse this German court, you will get up a quarrel with D'Harville, the intimate friend of the grand duke regnant, who, moreover, received me with the best possible grace at the embassy, where I was presented to him."

"Really, my dear Henry," said M. d'Harville, "if you knew the grand duke as I know him, you would understand that Saint-Remy could have no repugnance to passing some time at Gerolstein."

"I believe you, marquis, although they do say that he is very haughty and very peculiar, your grand duke; but that will not hinder a don like Saint-Remy, the finest sifting of the finest flour, from being unable to live anywhere but in Paris. It is in Paris only that he is duly appreciated."

The other guests of M. d'Harville now arrived, when Joseph entered, and said a few words in a low voice to his master.

"Gentlemen," said the marquis, "will you allow me? — it is my wife's jeweller, who has brought some diamonds to select for her, — a surprise. You understand that, Lucenay? We are husbands of the old sort, you and I."

"Ah, *pardieu!* If it is a surprise you mean," shouted the duke, "my wife gave me one yesterday, and a famous one too!"

"Some magnificent present?"

"She asked me for a hundred thousand francs (4,000*l.*)."

"And you are such a magnifico — you — "

"Lent them to her; they are advanced as mortgage on her Arnouville estate. Right reckonings make good friends, — but that's by the by. To lend in two hours a hundred thousand francs to a friend who requires that sum is what I call pretty, but rare. Is it not prodigal, you who are a connoisseur in loans?" said the duke, laughingly, to Saint-Remy, little thinking of the cutting purport of his words.

In spite of his effrontery, the viscount blushed slightly, and then replied, with composure:

"A hundred thousand francs? — that is immense! What could a woman ever want with such a sum as a hundred thousand francs? As for us men, that is quite a different matter."

"*Ma foi!* I really do not know what she could want with such a sum as that. But that's not my affair. Some arrears for the toilet, probably? The tradespeople hungry and annoying, — that's her affair. And, as you know very well, my dear Saint-Remy, that, as it was I who lent my wife the money, it would have been in the worst possible taste in me to have inquired the purpose for which she required it."

"Yet," said the viscount, with a laugh, "there is usually a singular curiosity on the part of those who lend money to know what is done with it."

"*Parbleu!* Saint-Remy," said M. d'Harville, "you have such exquisite taste, that you must help me to choose the ornament I intend for my wife. Your approbation will consecrate my choice; your decisions are sovereign in all that concerns the fashion."

The jeweller entered, bringing with him several caskets of gems in a large leather bag.

"Ah, it is M. Baudoin!" said M. de Lucenay.

"At your grace's service."

"I am sure that it is you who ruined my wife with your dazzling and infernal temptations," said M. de Lucenay.

"Madame la Duchesse has only had her diamonds reset this winter," said the jeweller, slightly embarrassed; "and now, as I came to M. le Marquis, I left them with her grace."

M. de Saint-Remy knew that Madame de Lucenay, to aid him, had changed her jewels for false stones. He was disagreeably embarrassed at this rencontre, but said, boldly:

"How curious these husbands are! — don't answer any inquisitive interrogatories, M. Baudoin."

"Curious; *ma foi!* no," said the duke; "it is my wife who pays. She can afford all her whims, for she is much richer than I am."

During this conversation, M. Baudoin had displayed on a table several superb necklaces of rubies and diamonds.

"What a fine water, and how exquisitely those stones are cut!" said Lord Douglas.

"Alas, sir!" said the jeweller, "I employed in this work one of the most skilful lapidaries in Paris, named Morel; but, unfortunately, he has become insane, and I shall never find such another workman. My matcher of stones says that, in all probability, it was his wretched condition that deprived the man of his senses, poor fellow!"

"Wretched condition! What! do you trust diamonds to people in distress?"

"Certainly, sir; and there is no instance of a lapidary having ever pilfered anything, however miserable and destitute his condition."

"How much for this necklace?" inquired M. d'Harville.

"M. le Marquis will observe that the stones are of a splendid water and cut, and nearly all of a size."

"These oratorical prefaces threaten your purse," said M. de Saint-Remy, with a laugh. "Now, my dear D'Harville, look out for a high price."

"Come, M. Baudoin, have a conscience, and ask the price you mean to take!" said M. d'Harville.

"I will not haggle with your lordship. The lowest price is forty-two thousand francs (11,680*l.*)."

"Gentlemen," exclaimed M. de Lucenay, "let us who are married admire D'Harville in silence. A man who contrives a surprise for his wife to the amount of forty-two thousand francs! *Diable!* we must not noise that abroad, or it would be a detestable precedent."

"Laugh on, gentlemen, as much as you please," said the marquis, gaily. "I love my wife, and am not ashamed to confess it; on the contrary, I boast of it."

"It is plain enough to be seen," said M. de Saint-Remy; "such a present speaks more eloquently than all the protestation in the world."

"I will take this necklace, then," said M. d'Harville, "if the setting of black enamel seems to you in good taste, Saint-Remy."

"Oh, it sets off the brilliancy of the stones; it is exquisitely devised."

"Then this it shall be," said M. d'Harville. "You will settle, M. Baudoin, with M. Doublet, my man of business."

"M. Doublet told me as much, my lord marquis," said the jeweller, who quitted the apartment, after having packed up his bag without counting the jewels which he had brought (such was his confidence), and notwithstanding M. de Saint-Remy had for a long time and curiously handled and examined them during the interview.

M. d'Harville gave the necklace to Joseph, who was waiting, and said to him, in a low tone:

"Mlle. Juliette must put these diamonds cleverly away with those of her mistress, so that la marquise

may not suspect; and then her surprise will be the greater."

At this moment the *maître d'hôtel* announced that the breakfast was ready; and the guests, passing into the dining-room, seated themselves.

"Do you know, my dear D'Harville," said M. de Lucenay, "that this house is one of the most elegant and best arranged in Paris?"

"It is very convenient, certainly, but we want room; I have a plan to add a gallery on the garden. Madame d'Harville wishes to give some grand balls, and our salons are not large enough. Then, I think, nothing is more inconvenient than the encroachments of fêtes on the apartments one usually occupies, and from which, on such occasions, you are necessarily driven."

"I am quite of D'Harville's opinion," said M. de Saint-Remy; "nothing is more wretched, more tradesmanlike, than these movings, compelled by the coming of balls and concerts. To give fêtes, really of the first class, without inconveniencing oneself, there must be devoted to their uses peculiar and special suites of apartments; and then vast and splendid rooms, devoted to a magnificent ball, ought to assume an appearance wholly distinct from that of ordinary salons. There is the same difference between these two sets of apartments as between a monumental fresco-painting and a sketch on a painter's easel."

"He is right," said M. d'Harville. "What a pity, gentlemen, that Saint-Remy has not twelve or fifteen hundred thousand livres a year! What wonders he would create for our admiration!"

"Since we have the happiness to possess a representative government," said the Duke de Lucenay, "the country ought to vote a million or two a year to Saint-Remy, and authorise him to represent in Paris the French taste and elegance, which should decide the taste and elegance of all Europe, — all the world."

"Adopted!" cried the guests in chorus.

"And we would raise these annual millions as compulsory taxes on those abominable misers, who, being possessors of colossal fortunes, should be marked down, accused, and convicted of living like gripe-farthings," added M. de Lucenay.

"And as such," added M. d'Harville, "condemned to defray those splendours which they ought to display."

"Not including that these functions of high priest, or, rather, grand master of elegance, which would devolve on Saint-Remy," continued M. de Lucenay, "would have, by imitation, an enormous influence on the general taste."

"He would be the type which all would seek to resemble."

"That is evident."

"And, in endeavouring to imitate him, taste would become purified."

"At the time of the Renaissance taste became universally excellent, because it was modelled on that of the aristocracy, which was exquisite."

"By the serious turn which the question has taken," said M. d'Harville, gaily, "I see that we have only to address a petition to the Chambers for the establishment of the office of grand master of French elegance."

"And as the Deputies have credit for possessing very elevated, very artistic, and very magnificent ideas, of course it will be voted by acclamation."

"Whilst we are waiting the decision which shall establish as a right the supremacy which Saint-Remy exercises in fact," said M. d'Harville, "I will ask him his opinion as to the gallery which I propose to erect; for I have been struck with his ideas as to the right splendour of fêtes."

"My faint lights are at your service, D'Harville."

"And when shall we commence our magnificences, my dear fellow?"

"Next year, I suppose, for I intend to begin my works without delay."

"How full of projects you are!"

"*Ma foi!* I have others also; I contemplate an entire alteration of Val-Richer."

"Your estate in Burgundy?"

"Yes; there is much that may be done there, if, indeed, God grants me life."

"Poor old fellow!"

"Have you not recently bought a farm near Val-Richer to complete your ring-fence?"

"Yes, a very nice thing, to which I was advised by my notary."

"And who is this rare and precious notary who advises such admirable purchases?"

"M. Jacques Ferrand."

At this name a slight shudder came over M. de Saint-Remy, and he frowned imperceptibly.

"Is he really the honest man they call him?" he inquired, carelessly, of M. d'Harville, who then remembered what Rodolph had related to Clémence about the notary.

"Jacques Ferrand? What a question! Why, his honesty is a proverb," said M. de Lucenay.

"As respected as respectable."

"And very pious; which does him no harm."

"Excessively stingy; which is a guarantee for his clients."

"In fact, he is one of the notaries of the 'old rock,' who ask you whom you take them for when you ask them for a receipt for the money which you place in their hands."

"That would have no effect on me; I would trust him with my whole fortune."

"But where the deuce did Saint-Remy imbibe his doubts with respect to this honest man, whose integrity is proverbial?"

"I am but the echo of certain vague reports; besides, I have no reason for running down this phœnix of notaries. But to return to your plans, D'Harville, what is it you wish to build at Val-Richer? I have heard that the château is excessively beautiful."

"Make yourself easy, my dear Saint-Remy, for you shall be consulted, and sooner than you expect, perhaps, for I take much pleasure in such works. I think that there is nothing more interesting than to have those affairs in hand, which expand as you examine them, and they advance, giving you occupation for years to come. To-day one project, next year another, after that something else springs up. Add to this a charming woman whom one adores, and who shares your every taste and pleasure, then, *ma foi!* life passes sweetly enough."

"I think so, *pardieu!* Why, it then makes earth a perfect paradise."

"Now, gentlemen," said D'Harville, when the breakfast was finished, "if you will smoke a cigar in my cabinet, you will find some excellent Havannahs there."

They rose from the table, and returned to the cabinet of the marquis. The door of his bedchamber, which communicated with it, was open. We have said the only decoration of the room consisted of two small racks of very beautiful arms.

M. de Lucenay, having lighted a cigar, followed the marquis into his room.

"You see, I am still a great lover of good weapons," said D'Harville to him.

"Yes, and I see you have here some splendid English and French guns. *Ma foi!* I hardly know which to admire most. Douglas," exclaimed M. de Lucenay, "come and see if these fowling-pieces are not equal to your crack Mantons."

Lord Douglas, Saint-Remy, and the two other guests went into the marquis's room to examine the arms.

M. d'Harville, taking down a duelling-pistol, cocked it, and said, laughingly:

"Here, gentlemen, is the universal panacea for all the ills, — spleen, disgust, weariness."

And as he spoke, jestingly, he placed the muzzle to his lips.

"*Ma foi!* I prefer another specific," said Saint-Remy; "that is only good in the most desperate cases."

"Yes, but it is so speedy," said M. d'Harville. "Click! and it is done!"

"Pray be cautious, D'Harville; these jokes are always so rash and dangerous; and accident happens in an instant," said M. de Lucenay.

"My dear fellow, do you think I would do so if it were loaded?"

"Of course not, but it is always imprudent."

"See, gentlemen, how it is done. You introduce the muzzle delicately between the teeth, and then —"

"How foolish you are, D'Harville, to place it so!" said M. de Lucenay.

"You place your finger on the trigger —" continued M. d'Harville.

"What a child! What folly at your age!"

"A small touch on the lock," added the marquis, "and one goes —"

As he spoke the pistol went off. M. d'Harville had blown his brains out.

It is impossible to paint the horror, — the stupor, of M. d'Harville's guests.

Next day the following appeared in one of the newspapers:

"Yesterday an event, as unforeseen as deplorable, put all the Faubourg St. Germain in a state of excitement. One of those imprudent acts, which every year produce such sad accidents, has caused this terrible misfortune. The following are the facts which we have gathered, the authenticity of which may be relied upon.

"The Marquis d'Harville, the possessor of an immense fortune, and scarcely twenty-six years of age, universally known for his kind-hearted benevolence, and married but a few years to a wife whom he idolised, had some friends to breakfast with him; on leaving the table, they went into M. d'Harville's sleeping apartment, where there were several firearms of considerable value. Whilst the guests were looking at some choice fowling-pieces, M. d'Harville in jest took up a pistol which he thought was not loaded, and placed the muzzle to his lips. Though warned by his friends, he pressed on the trigger, — the pistol went off, and the unfortunate young gentleman dropped down dead, with his skull horribly fractured. It is impossible to describe the extreme consternation of the friends of M. d'Harville, with whom but a few instants before he had been talking of various plans and projects, full of life, spirits, and animation. In fact, as if all the circumstances of this sad event must be still more cruel by the most painful contrasts, that very morning M. d'Harville, desirous of agreeably surprising his wife, had purchased a most expensive ornament, which he intended as a present to her. It was at this very moment, when, perhaps, life had never appeared more smiling and attractive, that he fell a victim to this most distressing accident.

"All reflections on such a dreadful event are useless. We can only remain overwhelmed at the inscrutable decrees of Providence."

We quote this journal in order to show the general opinion which attributed the death of Clémence's husband to fatal and lamentable imprudence.

Is there any occasion to say that M. d'Harville alone carried with him to the tomb the mysterious secret of his voluntary death, — yes, voluntary and calculated upon, and meditated with as much calmness as generosity, in order that Clémence might not conceive the slightest suspicion as to the real cause of his suicide?

Thus the projects of which M. d'Harville had talked with his steward and his friends, — those happy confidences to his old servant, the surprise which he proposed for his wife, were all but so many precautions for the public credulity.

How could it be supposed that a man so preoccupied as to the future, so anxious to please his wife, could

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How could it be supposed that a man so preoccupied as to the future, so anxious to please his wife, could

think of killing himself? His death was, therefore, attributed to imprudence, and could not be attributed to anything else.

As to his determination, an incurable despair had dictated that. By showing herself as affectionate towards him, and as tender as she had formerly been cold and disdainful, by again appearing to entertain a high regard, Clémence had awakened in the heart of her husband deep remorse.

Seeing her so sadly resigned to a long life without love, passed with a man visited by an incurable and frightful malady, and utterly persuaded that, after her solemn conversation, Clémence could never subdue the repugnance with which he inspired her, M. d'Harville was seized with a profound pity for his wife, and an entire disgust for himself and for life.

In the exasperation of his anguish, he said to himself:

"I only love, — I never can love, — but one woman in the world, and she is my own wife. Her conduct, full of noble-heartedness and high mind, would but increase my mad passion, if it be possible to increase it. And she, my wife, can never belong to me! She has a right to despise, — to hate me! I have, by base deceit, chained this young creature to my hateful lot! I repent it bitterly. What, then, should I do for her? Free her from the hateful ties which my selfishness has riveted upon her. My death alone can break those rivets; and I must, therefore, die by my own hand!"

This was why M. d'Harville had accomplished this great, — this terrible sacrifice.

The inexorable immutability of the law sometimes makes certain terrible positions irremediable, and, as in this case (as divorce was unattainable), only allows the injury to be effaced by an additional crime.

CHAPTER IX.

ST. LAZARE.

The prison of St. Lazare, especially devoted to female thieves and prostitutes, is daily visited by many ladies, whose charity, whose names, and whose social position command universal respect. These ladies, educated in the midst of the splendours of fortune, — these ladies, properly belonging to the best society, — come every week to pass long hours with the miserable prisoners of St. Lazare; watching in these degraded souls for the least indication of an aspiration towards good, the least regret for a past criminal life, and encouraging the good tendencies, urging repentance, and, by the potent magic of the words, Duty, Honour, Virtue, withdrawing from time to time one of these abandoned, fallen, degraded, despised creatures, from the depths of utter pollution.

Accustomed to delicacy and the most polished breeding of the highest circles, these courageous females quit their homes, after having pressed their lips on the virgin foreheads of their daughters, pure as the angels of heaven, and go into dark prisons to brave the coarse indifference or infamous language of these thieves and lost women.

Faithful to their tasks of high morality, they boldly plunge into the tainted soil, place their hands on those gangrened hearts, and, if any feeble pulsation of honour reveals to them a slight hope of recovery, they contend for and snatch from irrevocable perdition the wretched soul of which they have never despaired.

Having said so much by way of introduction to the new scenes to which we are about to direct attention, we will introduce the reader to St. Lazare, an immense edifice of imposing and repulsive aspect, situated in the Faubourg St. Denis.

Ignorant of the shocking drama that was passing at her own house, Madame d'Harville had gone to the prison, after having received certain information from Madame de Lucenay as to the two unhappy females whom the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand had plunged into misery. Madame de Blinval, one of the patronesses of the charity of the young prisoners, being on this day unable to accompany Clémence to St. Lazare, she had gone thither alone. She was received with great attention by the governor and the several female superintendents, who were distinguished by their black garments and the blue riband with the silver medal which they wore around their necks. One of these superintendents, a female of mature age, with a serious but kind expression of countenance, remained alone with Madame d'Harville, in a small room attached to the registry office.

We may easily suppose that there is often unrecognised devotion, understanding, commiseration, and sagacity amongst the respectable females who devote themselves to the humble and obscure function of superintendent of the prisoners. Nothing can be more excellent, more practical, than the notions of order, work, and duty which they endeavour to instil into the prisoners, in the hope that these instructions may survive their term of imprisonment. In turns indulgent and firm, patient and severe, but always just and impartial, these females, incessantly in contact with the prisoners, end, after the lengthened experience of years, by acquiring such a knowledge of the physiognomy of these unfortunates that they can judge of them almost invariably from the first glance, and

can at once classify them according to their degree of immorality.

Madame Armand, the inspectress who remained with Madame d'Harville, possessed in a remarkable degree this almost supernatural prescience as to the character of the prisoners; her words and decisions had very great weight in the establishment.

Madame Armand said to Clémence:

"Since madame wishes me to point out to her such of our prisoners as have by good conduct, or sincere repentance, deserved that an interest should be taken in them, I believe I can mention to her a poor girl whom I believe to be more unfortunate than culpable; for I am not deceived when I say that it is not too late to save this young girl, an unhappy creature of not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age."

"And for what is she imprisoned?"

"She is guilty of being found in the Champs Elysées in the evening. As it is prohibited to such females, under very severe penalties, to frequent, by day or night, certain public places, and as the Champs Elysées are in the number of the forbidden promenades, she was apprehended."

"And does she appear to you interesting?"

"I never saw features more regular, more ingenuous. Picture to yourself, my lady, the face of a Virgin; and what adds still more to the expression of modesty in her countenance is that, on coming here, she was dressed like a peasant girl of the environs of Paris."

"She is, then, a country girl?"

"No, my lady; the inspectors knew her again. She had lived for some weeks in a horrible abode in the Cité, from which she has been absent for two or three months; but, as she had not demanded the erasure of her name from the police registries, she comes under the power of that body, which has sent her hither."

"But, perhaps, she had quitted Paris to try and reinstate herself?"

"I think so, madame; and it is therefore I have taken such an interest in her. I have questioned her as to her past life, inquired if she came from the country, and told her to hope, as I did myself, that she might still return to a course of good life."

"And what reply did she make?"

"Lifting her full and melancholy blue eyes on me, filled with tears, she said, with angelic sweetness, 'I thank you, madame, for your kindness; but I cannot say one word as to the past; I was apprehended, — I was doing wrong, and I do not therefore complain.' 'But where do you come from? Where have you been since you quitted the Cité? If you went into the country to seek an honest livelihood, say so, and prove it. We will write to the prefect to obtain your liberty, your name will be scratched off the police register, and you will be encouraged in your good resolutions.' 'I beseech you, madame, do not ask me; I cannot answer you,' she replied. 'But, on leaving this house, would you return again to that place of infamy?' 'Oh, never!' she exclaimed. 'What, then, will you do?' 'God only knows!' she replied, letting her head fall on her bosom."

"Very singular! And she expresses herself — "

"In very excellent terms, madame; her deportment is timid and respectful, but without servility; nay, more, in spite of the extreme gentleness of her voice and look, there is in her accent and her attitude a sort of proud sorrow which puzzles me. If she did not belong to that wretched class of which she forms one, I should say that her haughtiness announces a soul which has a consciousness of dignity."

"But this is all a romance!" exclaimed Clémence, deeply interested, and finding, as Rodolph had told her, that nothing was more interesting than to do

good. "And how does she behave with the other prisoners? If she is endowed with that dignity of soul that you imagine, she must suffer excessively in the midst of her wretched associates."

"Madame, for me, who observe all from my position, and from habit, all about this young girl is a subject of astonishment. Although she has been here only three days, yet she already possesses a sort of influence over the other prisoners."

"In so short a time?"

"They feel for her not only interest, but almost respect."

"What! these unhappy women —"

"Have sometimes the instinct of a remarkable delicacy in recognising and detecting noble qualities in others; only, they frequently hate those persons whose superiority they are compelled to admit."

"But do they hate this poor girl?"

"Far from it, my lady; none of them knew her before she came here. They were at first struck with her appearance. Her features, although of singular beauty, are, if I may so express myself, covered with a touching and sickly paleness; and this melancholy and gentle countenance at first inspired them with more interest than jealousy. Then she is very silent, another source of surprise for these creatures, who, for the most part, always endeavour to banish thought by making a noise, talking, and moving about. In fact, although reserved and retiring, she showed herself compassionate, which prevented her companions from taking offence at her coldness of manner. This is not all: about a month since, an intractable creature, nicknamed La Louve (the she-wolf), such is her violent and brutal character, became a resident here. She is a woman of twenty years of age, tall, masculine, with good-looking but strongly marked features, and we are sometimes compelled to place her in the black-hole to subdue her violence. The

day before yesterday, only, she came out of the cell, still irritated at the punishment she had undergone; it was meal-time, the poor girl of whom I speak could not eat, and said, sorrowfully, to her companions, 'Who will have my bread?' 'I will!' said La Louve. 'I will!' then said a creature almost deformed, called Mont Saint-Jean, who is the laughing-stock and, sometimes in spite of us, the butt of the other prisoners, although several months advanced in pregnancy. The young girl gave her bread to this latter, to the extreme anger of La Louve. 'It was I who asked you for the allowance first!' she exclaimed, furiously. 'That is true; but this poor woman is about to become a mother, and wants it more than you do,' replied the young girl. La Louve, notwithstanding, snatched the bread from the hands of Mont Saint-Jean, and began to wave her knife about, and to vociferate loudly. As she is very evil-disposed and much feared, no one dared take the part of the poor Goualeuse, although all the prisoners silently sided with her."

"What do you call her name, madame?"

"La Goualeuse; it is the name, or rather the nick-name, under which they brought her here who is my protégée, and will, I hope, my lady, soon be yours. Almost all of them have borrowed names."

"This is a very singular one."

"It signifies in their horrid jargon 'the singer,' for the young girl has, they told me, a very delightful voice; and I believe it, for her speaking tones are sweetness itself."

"But how did she escape from this wretch, La Louve?"

"Rendered still more furious by the composure of La Goualeuse, she rushed towards her, uttering menaces, and with her uplifted knife in her hand. All the prisoners cried out with fear; La Goualeuse alone, looking at this fierce creature without alarm, smiled at her bitterly and said, in her sweet voice, 'Oh, kill me! Kill

me! I am willing to die. But do not make me suffer too great pain!' These words, they told me, were uttered with a simplicity so affecting, that almost all the prisoners burst into tears."

"I can imagine so," said Madame d'Harville, deeply moved.

"The worst characters," continued the inspectress, "have, fortunately, occasional good feelings. When she heard these words, bearing the stamp of such painful resignation, La Louve, touched (as she afterwards declared) to her inmost core, threw her knife on the ground, fell at her feet and exclaimed, 'It was wrong — shameful to threaten you, Goualeuse, for I am stronger than you! You are not afraid of my knife; you are bold — brave! I like brave people; and now, from this day forth, if any dare to molest you, let them beware, for I will defend you.'"

"What a singular being!"

"This incident strengthened La Goualeuse's influence still more and more. A thing almost unexampled here, none of the prisoners accost her familiarly. The majority are respectful to her, and even proffer to do for her all the little services that prisoners can render to one another. I spoke to some of the women of her dormitory, to learn the reason of this deference which was evinced towards her. 'It is hardly explicable to ourselves,' they replied; 'but it is easy to perceive she is not one of us.' 'But who told you so?' 'No one told us; it is easy to discover it.' 'By what?' 'By a thousand things. In the first place, before she goes to bed, she goes down on her knees and says her prayers; and if she pray, as La Louve says, why, she must have a right to do so.'"

"What a strange observation!"

"These unhappy creatures have no religious feeling, and still they never utter here an impious or irreligious word. You will see, madame, in all our rooms small altars, where the statue of the Virgin is surrounded with

offerings and ornaments which they have made. Every Sunday they burn a quantity of wax candles before them in *ex-voto*. Those who attend the chapel behave remarkably well; but generally the very sight of holy places frightens them. To return to La Goualeuse; her companions said to me, 'We see that she is not one of us, by her gentle ways, her sadness, and the manner in which she talks.' 'And then,' added La Louve (who was present at this conversation), abruptly, 'it is quite certain that she is not one of us, for this morning, in the dormitory, without knowing why, we were all ashamed of dressing ourselves before her.'"

"What remarkable delicacy in the midst of so much degradation!" exclaimed Madame d'Harville.

"Yes, madame, in the presence of men, and amongst themselves, modesty is unknown to them, and yet they are painfully confused at being seen half dressed by us or the charitable visitors who come, like your ladyship, to the prison. Thus the profound instinct of modesty, which God has implanted in us, reveals itself even in these fallen creatures, at the sight of those persons whom they can respect."

"It is at least consolatory to find some good and natural feelings, which are stronger even than depravity."

"Assuredly it is; and these women are capable of devoted attachments which, were they worthily placed, would be most honourable. There is also another sacred feeling with them, who respect nothing, fear nothing, and that is maternity. They honour it, rejoice at it; and they are admirable mothers, considering nothing a sacrifice to keep their children near them. They will undergo any trouble, difficulty, or danger that they may bring them up; for, as they say, these little beings are the only ones who do not despise them."

"Have they, then, so deep a sense of their abject condition?"

"They are not half so much despised by others as they despise themselves. With those who sincerely repent, the original blot of sin is ineffaceable in their own eyes, even if they should find themselves in a better position; others go mad, so irremediably is this idea imprinted in their minds; and I should not be surprised, madame, if the heartfelt grief of La Goualeuse is attributable to something of this nature."

"If so, how she must suffer! — a remorse which nothing can soothe!"

"Fortunately, madame, this remorse is more frequent than is commonly believed. The avenging conscience is never completely lulled to sleep; or, rather, strange as it may appear, sometimes it would seem that the soul is awake whilst the body is in a stupor; and this remark I again made last night in reference to my protégée."

"What! La Goualeuse?"

"Yes, madame."

"In what way?"

"Frequently, when the prisoners are asleep, I walk through the dormitories. You would scarcely believe, my lady, how the countenances of these women differ in expression whilst they are slumbering. A good number of them, whom I have seen during the day, saucy, careless, bold, insolent, have appeared entirely changed when sleep has removed from their features all exaggeration of bravado; for, alas, vice has its pride! Oh, madame, what sad revelations on those dejected, mournful, and gloomy faces! What painful sighs, involuntarily elicited by some dream. I was speaking to your ladyship just now of the girl they call La Louve, — an untamed, untamable creature. It is but a fortnight since that she abused me in the vilest terms before all the prisoners. I shrugged up my shoulders, and my indifference whetted her rage. Then, in order to offend me more sorely, she began to say all sorts of disgraceful things

of my mother, whom she had often seen come here to visit me."

"What a shameful creature!"

"I confess that, although this attack was not worth minding, yet it made me feel uncomfortable. La Louve perceived this, and rejoiced in it. The same night, about midnight, I went to inspect the dormitories; I went to La Louve's bedside (she was not to be put in the dark cell until next day) and I was struck with her calmness, — I might say the sweetness of her countenance, — compared with the harsh and daring expression which is habitual to it. Her features seemed suppliant, filled with regret and contrition; her lips were half open, her breast seemed oppressed, and — what appeared to me incredible, for I thought it impossible — two tears, two large tears, were in the eyes of this woman, whose disposition was of iron! I looked at her in silence for several minutes, when I heard her say, 'Pardon! Pardon! Her mother!' I listened more attentively, but all I could catch, in the midst of a murmur scarcely intelligible, was my name, 'Madame Armand,' uttered with a sigh."

"She repented, during her sleep, of having uttered this bad language about your mother."

"So I believe; and that made me less severe. No doubt she desired, through a miserable vanity, to increase her natural insolence in her companions' eyes, whilst, perhaps, a good instinct made her repent in her sleep."

"And did she evince any repentance for her bad behaviour next day?"

"Not the slightest, but conducted herself as usual, and was coarse, rude, and obstinate; but I assure your ladyship that nothing disposes us more to pity than the observations I have mentioned to you. I am persuaded (I may deceive myself, perhaps) that, during their sleep, these unfortunates become better, or rather return to themselves, with all their faults, it is true, but also

with certain good instincts, no longer masked by the detestable assumption of vice. From all I have observed, I am led to believe that these creatures are generally less wicked than they affect to be; and, acting upon this conviction, I have often attained results it would have been impossible to realise, if I had entirely despaired of them."

Madame d'Harville could not conceal her surprise at so much good sense, and so much just reasoning, joined to sentiments of humanity so noble and so practical, in an obscure inspectress of degraded women.

"But my dear madame," observed Clémence, "you must have a great deal of courage, and much strength of mind, not to be repulsed by the ungratefulness of the task, which must so very seldom reward you by satisfactory results!"

"The consciousness of fulfilling a duty sustains and encourages, and sometimes we are recompensed by happy discoveries; now and then we find some rays of light in hearts which have hitherto been supposed to be in utter darkness."

"Yet, madame, persons like you are very rarely met with?"

"No, I assure your ladyship, others do as I do, with more success and intelligence than I have. One of the inspectresses of the other division of St. Lazare, which is occupied by females charged with different crimes, would interest you much more. She told me this morning of the arrival of a young girl accused of infanticide. I never heard anything more distressing. The father of the unhappy girl, a hard-working, honest lapidary, has gone mad with grief on hearing his daughter's shame. It seems that nothing could be more frightful than the destitution of all this family, who lived in a wretched garret in the Rue du Temple."

"The Rue du Temple!" exclaimed Madame d'Harville, much astonished; "what is the workman's name?"

"His daughter's name is Louise Morel."

"'Tis as I thought, then!"

"She was in the service of a respectable lawyer named M. Jacques Ferrand."

"This poor family has been recommended to me," said Clémence, blushing; "but I was far from expecting to see it bowed down by this fresh and terrible blow. And Louise Morel —"

"Declares her innocence, and affirms her child was born dead; and it seems as if hers were accents of truth. Since your ladyship takes an interest in this family, if you would be so good as to see the poor girl, perhaps this mark of your kindness might soothe her despair, which they tell me is really alarming."

"Certainly I will see her; then I shall have two protégées instead of one, Louise Morel and La Goualeuse, for all you tell me relative to this poor girl interests me excessively. But what must be done to obtain her liberty? I will then find a situation for her. I will take care of her in future."

"With your connections, madame, it will be very easy for you to obtain her liberty the day after to-morrow, for it is at the discretion of the Prefect of Police, and the application of a person of consequence would be decisive with him. But I have wandered from the observation which I made on the slumber of La Goualeuse; and, with reference to this, I must confess that I should not be astonished if, to the deeply painful feeling of her first error, there is added some other grief no less severe."

"What mean you, madame?"

"Perhaps I am deceived; but I should not be astonished if this young girl, rescued by some circumstance from the degradation in which she was first plunged, has now some honest love, which is at the same time her happiness and her torment."

"What are your reasons for believing this?"

"The determined silence which she keeps as to where

she has passed the three months which followed her departure from the Cité makes me think that she fears being discovered by the persons with whom she in all probability found a shelter."

"Why should she fear this?"

"Because then she would have to own to a previous life, of which they are no doubt ignorant."

"True; her peasant's dress."

"And then a subsequent circumstance has confirmed my suspicions. Yesterday evening, when I was walking my round of inspection in the dormitory, I went up to La Goualeuse's bed. She was in a deep sleep, and, unlike her companions, her features were calm and tranquil. Her long, light hair, half disengaged from their bands, fell in profusion down her neck and shoulders. Her two small hands were clasped, and crossed over her bosom, as if she had gone to sleep whilst praying. I looked for some moments with interest at her lovely face, when, in a low voice, and with an accent at once respectful, sad, and impassioned, she uttered a name."

"And that name?"

After a moment's silence, Madame Armand replied, gravely:

"Although I consider that anything learnt during sleep is sacred, yet you interest yourself so generously in this unfortunate girl, madame, that I will confide this name to your secrecy. It was Rodolph."

"Rodolph!" exclaimed Madame d'Harville, thinking of the prince. Then, reflecting that, after all, his highness the Grand Duke of Gerolstein could have no connection with the Rodolph of the poor Goualeuse, she said to the inspectress, who seemed astonished at her exclamation:

"The name has surprised me, madame, for, by a singular chance, it is that of a relation of mine; but what you tell me of La Goualeuse interests me more and more. Can I see her to-day? now — directly?"

"Yes, madame, I will go, as you wish it, and ask her; I can also learn more of Louise Morel, who is in the other side of the prison."

"I shall, indeed, be greatly obliged to you, madame," replied Madame d'Harville, who the next moment was alone.

"How strange!" she said. "I cannot account for the singular impression which this name of Rodolph makes upon me! I am really quite insane! What connection can there be between him and such a creature?" Then, after a moment's silence, the marchioness added, "He was right; how all this does interest me! The mind, the heart, expand when they are occupied so nobly! 'Tis as he said; we seem to participate somewhat in the power of Providence when we aid those who deserve it; and, then, these excursions into a world of which we had no idea are so attractive, — so amusing, as he said so pleasantly! What romance could give me such deep feelings, excite my curiosity to such a pitch? This poor Goualeuse, for instance, has inspired me with deep pity, after all I have heard of her; and I will blindly follow up this commiseration, for the inspectress has too much experience to be deceived with respect to our protégée. And the other unhappy girl, — the artisan's daughter, whom the prince has so generously succoured in my name! Poor people! their bitter suffering has served as a pretext to save me. I have escaped shame, perhaps death, by a hypocritical falsehood. This deceit weighs on my mind, but I will expiate my fault by my charity, though that may be too easy a mode. It is so sweet to follow Rodolph's noble advice! It is to love as well as to obey him. Oh, I feel it with rapture! His breath, alone, animates and fertilises the new existence which he has given me in directing me to console those who suffer. I experience an unalloyed delight in acting but as he directs, in having no ideas but his; for I love him, — ah, yes, I love him! And yet

he shall always be in ignorance of this, the lasting passion of my life."

Whilst Madame d'Harville is waiting for La Goualeuse, we will conduct the reader into the presence of the prisoners.

CHAPTER X.

MONT SAINT-JEAN.

It was just two o'clock by the dial of the prison of St. Lazare. The cold, which had lasted for several days, had been succeeded by soft, mild, and almost spring weather; the rays of the sun were reflected in the water of the large square basin, with its stone corners, formed in the centre of a courtyard planted with trees, and surrounded by dark, high walls pierced with a great many iron-barred windows. Wooden benches were fastened here and there in this large paved enclosure, which served for the walking-place of the prisoners. The ringing of a bell announcing the hour of recreation, the prisoners came in throngs by a thick wicket-door which was opened to them. These women, all clad alike, wore black skull-caps and long loose gowns of blue woollen cloth, fastened around the waist by a band and iron buckle. There were there two hundred prostitutes, sentenced for breach of the particular laws which control them and place them out of the pale of the common law. At first sight their appearance had nothing striking, but, after regarding them with further attention, there might be detected in each face the almost ineffaceable stigmas of vice, and particularly that brutishness which ignorance and misery invariably engender. Whilst contemplating these masses of lost creatures, we cannot help recollecting with sorrow that most of them have been pure and honest, at least at some former period. We say "most of them," because there are some who have been corrupted, vitiated, depraved, not only from their

youth, but from tenderest infancy, — even from their very birth, if we may say so; and we shall prove it as we proceed.

We ask ourselves, then, with painful curiosity, what chain of fatal causes could thus debase these unhappy creatures, who have known shame and chastity? There are so many declivities, alas, which verge to that fall! It is rarely the passion of the depraved for depravity; but dissipation, bad example, perverse education, and, above all, want, which lead so many unfortunates to infamy; and it is the poor classes alone who pay to civilisation this impost on soul and body.

When the prisoners came into the yard, running and crying out, it was easy to discern that it was not alone the pleasure of leaving their work that made them so noisy. After having hurried forth by the only gate which led to this yard, the crowd spread out and made a ring around a misshapen being, whom they assailed with shouts. She was a small woman, from thirty-six to forty years of age; short, round-shouldered, deformed, and with her neck buried between shoulders of unequal height. They had snatched off her black cap, and her hair, which was flaxen, or rather a pale yellow, coarse, matted, and mingled with gray, fell over her low and stupid features. She was clad in a blue loose gown, like the other prisoners, and had under her right arm a small bundle, wrapped up in a miserable, ragged, checked pocket-handkerchief. With her left elbow she endeavoured to ward off the blows aimed at her. Nothing could be more lamentably ludicrous than the visage of this unhappy woman. She was hideous and distorted in figure, with projecting features, wrinkled, tanned, and dirty, which were pierced with two holes for nostrils, and two small, red, bloodshot eyes. By turns wrathful and imploring, she scolded and entreated; but they laughed even more at her complaints than her threats.

This woman was the plaything of the prisoners. One thing ought, however, to have protected her from such ill-usage, — she was evidently about to become a mother; but her ugliness, her imbecility, and the custom they had of considering her as a victim intended for common sport, rendered her persecutors implacable, in spite of their usual respect for maternity.

Amongst the fiercest enemies of Mont Saint-Jean (that was the unhappy wretch's name), La Louve was conspicuous. La Louve was a strapping girl of twenty, active, and powerfully grown, with regular features. Her coarse black hair was varied by reddish shades, whilst her blood suffused her skin with its hue; a brown down shaded her thin lips; her chestnut eyebrows, thick and projecting, were united over her large and fierce eyes. There was something violent, savage, and brutal in the expression of this woman's physiognomy, — a sort of habitual sneer, which curled her upper lip during a fit of rage, and, exposing her white and wide-apart teeth, accounted for her name of La Louve (the she-wolf). Yet in that countenance there was more of boldness and insolence than cruelty; and, in a word, it was seen that, rather become vicious than born so, this woman was still susceptible of certain good impulses, as the inspectress had told Madame d'Harville.

"Alas! alas! What have I done?" exclaimed Mont Saint-Jean, struggling in the midst of her companions. "Why are you so cruel to me?"

"Because it is so amusing."

"Because you are only fit to be teased."

"It is your business."

"Look at yourself, and you will see that you have no right to complain."

"But you know well enough that I don't complain as long as I can help it; I bear it as long as I can."

"Well, we'll let you alone, if you will tell us why you call yourself Mont Saint-Jean."

"Yes, yes; come, tell us all that directly."

"Why, I've told you a hundred times. It was an old soldier that I loved a long while ago, and who was called so because he was wounded at the battle of Mont Saint-Jean; so I took his name. That's it; now are you satisfied? You will make me repeat the same thing over, and over, and over!"

"If your soldier was like you, he was a beauty!"

"I suppose he was in the Invalids?"

"The remains of a man —"

"How many glass eyes had he?"

"And wasn't his nose of block tin?"

"He must have been short of two arms and two legs, besides being deaf and blind, if he took up with you."

"I am ugly, — a monster, I know that as well as you can tell me. Say what you like, — make game of me, if you choose, it's all one to me; only don't beat me, that's all, I beg!"

"What have you got in that old handkerchief?" asked La Louve.

"Yes, yes! What is it?"

"Show it up directly!"

"Let's see! Let's see!"

"Oh, no, I beg!" exclaimed the miserable creature, squeezing up the little bundle in her hands with all her might.

"What! Must we take it from you?"

"Yes, snatch it from her, La Louve!"

"Oh, you won't be so wicked? Let it go! Let it go, I say!"

"What is it?"

"Why, it's the beginning of my baby linen; I make it with the old bits of linen which no one wants, and I pick up. It's nothing to you, is it?"

"Oh, the baby linen of Mont Saint-Jean's little one! That must be a rum set out!"

"Let's look at it."

"The baby clothes! The baby clothes!"

"She has taken measure of the keeper's little dog, no doubt."

"Here's your baby clothes," cried La Louve, snatching the bundle from Mont Saint-Jean's grasp.

The handkerchief, already torn, was now rent to tatters, and a quantity of fragments of stuff of all colours, and old pieces of linen half cut out, flew around the yard, and were trampled under feet by the prisoners, who holloaed and laughed louder than before.

"Here's your rags!"

"Why, it is a ragpicker's bag."

"Patterns from the ragman's."

"What a shop!"

"And to sew all that rubbish!"

"Why, there's more thread than stuff."

"What nice embroidery!"

"Here, pick up your rags and tatters, Mont Saint-Jean."

"Oh, how wicked! Oh, how cruel!" exclaimed the poor ill-used creature, running in every direction after the pieces, which she endeavoured to pick up in spite of pushes and blows. "I never did anybody any harm," she added, weeping. "I have offered, if they would let me alone, to do anything I could for anybody, to give them half my allowance, although I am always so hungry; but, no! no! it's always so. What can I do to be left in peace? They haven't even pity of a poor woman in the family way. They are more cruel than the beasts. Oh, the trouble I had to collect these little bits of linen! How else can I make the clothes for my baby, for I have no money to buy them with? What harm was there in picking up what nobody else wanted when it was thrown away?" Then Mont Saint-Jean exclaimed suddenly, with a ray of hope, "Oh, there you are, Goualeuse! Now, then, I'm safe; do speak to them for me; they will listen to you, I am sure, for they love you as much as they hate me."

La Goualeuse was the last of the prisoners who entered the enclosure.

Fleur-de-Marie wore the blue woollen gown and black skull-cap of the prisoners; but even in this coarse costume she was still charming. Yet, since her carrying off from the farm of Bouqueval (the consequences of which circumstance we will explain hereafter), her features seemed greatly altered; her pale cheeks, formerly tinged with a slight colour, were as wan as the whiteness of alabaster; the expression, too, of her countenance had changed, and was now imprinted with a kind of dignified grief. Fleur-de-Marie felt that to bear courageously the painful sacrifices of expiation is almost to attain restored position.

"Ask a favour for me, Goualeuse," said poor Mont Saint-Jean, beseechingly, to the young girl; "see how they are flinging about the yard all I had collected, with so much trouble, to begin my baby linen for my child. What good can it do them?"

Fleur-de-Marie did not say a word, but began very actively to pick up, one by one, from under the women's feet, all the rags she could collect. One prisoner ill-temperedly kept her foot on a sort of little bed-gown of coarse woollen cloth. Fleur-de-Marie, still stooping, looked up at the woman, and said to her in a sweet tone:

"I beg of you let me pick it up. I ask it in the name of this poor woman who is weeping."

The prisoner removed her foot. The bed-gown was rescued, as well as most of the other scraps, which La Goualeuse acquired piece by piece. There remained to obtain a small child's cap, which two prisoners were struggling for, and laughing at. Fleur-de-Marie said to them:

"Be all good, pray do. Let me have the little cap."

"Oh, to be sure! It's for a harlequin in swaddling-clothes this cap is! It is made of a bit of gray stuff,

with points of green and black fustian, and lined with a bit of an old mattress cover."

The description was exact, and was hailed with loud and long-continued shoutings.

"Laugh away, but let me have it," said Mont Saint-Jean; "and pray do not drag it in the mud as you have some of the other things. I'm sorry you've made your hands so dirty for me, Goualeuse," she added, in a grateful tone.

"Let me have the harlequin's cap," said La Louve, who obtained possession of it, and waved it in the air as a trophy.

"Give it to me, I entreat you," said Goualeuse.

"No! You want to give it back to Mont Saint-Jean."

"Certainly I do."

"Oh, it is not worth while, it is such a rag."

"Mont Saint-Jean has nothing but rags to dress her child in, and you ought to have pity upon her, La Louve," said Fleur-de-Marie, in a mournful voice, and stretching out her hand towards the cap.

"You sha'n't have it!" answered La Louve, in a brutal tone; "must everybody always give way to you because you are the weakest? You come, I see, to abuse the kindness that is shown to you."

"But," said La Goualeuse, with a smile full of sweetness, "where would be the merit of giving up to me, if I were the stronger of the two?"

"No, no; you want to wheedle me over with your smooth, canting words; but it won't do, — you sha'n't have it, I tell you."

"Come, come, now, La Louve, do not be ill-natured."

"Let me alone! You tire me to death!"

"Oh, pray do!"

"I will not!"

"Yes, do, — let me beg of you!"

"Now, don't put me in a passion," exclaimed La Louve, thoroughly irritated. "I have said no, and I mean no."

"Take pity on the poor thing, see how she is crying!"

"What is that to me? So much the worse for her; she is our pain-bearer" (*souffre douleur*).

"So she is," murmured out a number of the prisoners, instigated by the example of La Louve. "No, no, she ought not to have her rags back! So much the worse for Mont Saint-Jean."

"You are right," said Fleur-de-Marie, with bitterness; "it is so much the worse for her; she is your pain-bearer, she ought to submit herself to your pleasure, — her tears and sighs amuse and divert you! — and you must have some way of passing your time. Were you to kill her on the spot, she would have no right to say anything. You speak truly, La Louve, this is just and fair, is it not? Here is a poor, weak, defenceless woman; alone in the midst of so many, she is quite unable to defend herself, yet you all combine against her! Certainly your behaviour towards her is most just and generous!"

"And I suppose you mean to say we are all a parcel of cowards?" retorted La Louve, carried away by the violence of her disposition and extreme impatience at anything like contradiction. "Answer me, do you call us cowards, eh? Speak out, and let us know your meaning," continued she, growing more and more incensed.

A murmur of displeasure against La Goualeuse, not unmixed with threats, arose from the assembled crowd. The offended prisoners thronged around her, vociferating their disapprobation, forgetting, or remembering but as a fresh cause of offence, the ascendency she had until the present moment exercised over them.

"She calls us cowards, you see!"

"What business has she to find fault with us?"

"Is she better than we are, I should like to know?"

"Ah, we have all been too kind to her!"

"And now she wants to give herself fine lady airs, and to domineer over us! If we choose to torment Mont Saint-Jean, what need has she to interfere?"

"Since it has come to this, I tell you what, Mont Saint-Jean, you shall fare the worse for it for the future."

"Take this to begin with!" said one of the most violent of the party, giving her a blow.

"And if you meddle again with what does not concern you, La Goualeuse, we will serve you the same."

"Yes, that we will."

"But that is not all!" said La Louve. "La Goualeuse must ask our pardon for having called us cowards. She must and she shall! If we don't put a stop to her goings on, she will soon leave us without the power of saying our soul is our own, and we are great fools not to have seen this sooner."

"Make her ask our pardon."

"On her knee."

"On both knees."

"Or we will serve her precisely the same as we did her protégée, Mont Saint-Jean!"

"Down on her knees! Down with her!"

"Lo! we are cowards, are we?"

"Dare to say it again!"

Fleur-de-Marie allowed this tumult to pass away, ere she replied to the many furious voices that were raging around her. Then, casting a mild and melancholy glance at the exasperated crowd, she said to La Louve, who persisted in vociferating, "Will you dare to call us cowards again?"

"You? Oh, no, not you! I call this poor woman, whom you have so roughly treated, whom you have dragged through the mud, and whose clothes you have nearly torn off, a coward. Do you not see how she trembles, and dares not even look at you? No, no! I say again, 'tis she who is a coward, for being thus afraid of you."

Fleur-de-Marie had touched the right chord; in vain might she have appealed to their sense of justice and duty, in order to allay their bitter irritation against poor

Mont Saint-Jean; the stupid or brutalised minds of the prisoners would alike have been inaccessible to her pleadings; but, by addressing herself to that sentiment of generosity, which is never wholly extinct, even in the most depraved characters, she kindled a spark of pity, that required but skilful management to fan into a flame of commiseration, instead of hatred and violence. La Louve, amid their continued murmurings against La Goualeuse and her protégée, felt, and confessed, that their conduct had been both unwomanly and cowardly.

Fleur-de-Marie would not carry her first triumph too far. She contented herself with merely saying:

"Surely, if this poor creature, whom you call yours, to tease, to torment, to ill-use,—in fact, your *souffre douleur*,—be not worthy of your pity, her infant has done nothing to offend you. Did you forget, when striking the mother, that the unborn babe might suffer from your blows? And when she besought your mercy, 'twas not for herself, but her child. When she craves of you a morsel of bread, if, indeed, you have it to spare, 'tis not to satisfy her own hunger she begs it, but that her infant may live; and when, with streaming eyes, she implored of you to spare the few rags she had with so much difficulty collected together, it arose from a mother's love for that unseen treasure her heart so loves and prizes. This poor little patchwork cap, and the pieces of old mattresses she has so awkwardly sewed together, no doubt appear to you fit objects of mirth; but, for my own part, I feel far more inclined to cry than to laugh at seeing the poor creature's instinctive attempts to provide for her babe. So, if you laugh at Mont Saint-Jean, let me come in for my share of your ridicule."

Not the faintest attempt at a smile appeared on any countenance, and La Louve continued, with fixed gaze, to contemplate the little cap she still held in her hand.

"I know very well," said Fleur-de-Marie, drying her

eyes with the back of her white and delicate hand, — "I know very well that you are not really ill-natured or cruel, and that you merely torment Mont Saint-Jean from thoughtlessness. But consider that she and her infant are one. If she held it in her arms, not only would you carefully avoid doing it the least injury, but I am quite sure, if it were cold, you would even take from your own garments to cover it. Would not you, La Louve? Oh, I know you would, every one of you!"

"To be sure we would, — every one pities a tender baby."

"That is quite natural."

"And if it cried with hunger, you would take the bread from your own mouth to feed it with. Would not you, La Louve?"

"That I would, and willingly, too! I am not more hard-hearted than other people!"

"Nor more are we!"

"A poor, helpless, little creature!"

"Who could have the heart to think of harming it?"

"They must be downright monsters!"

"Perfect savages!"

"Worse than wild beasts!"

"I told you so," resumed Fleur-de-Marie. "I said you were not intentionally unkind; and you have proved that you are good and pitying towards Mont Saint-Jean. The fault consisted in your not reflecting that, although her child is yet unborn, it is still liable to harm from any mischief that befalls its mother. That is all the wrong you have done."

"All the wrong we have done!" exclaimed La Louve, much excited. "But I say it is not all. You were right, La Goualeuse. We acted like a set of cowards; and you alone deserve to be called courageous, because you did not fear to tell us so, or shrink from us after you had told us. It is nonsense to seek to deny

the fact that you are not a creature like us, — it is no use trying to persuade ourselves you are like such beings as we are, so we may as well give it up. I don't like to own it, but it is so; and I may just as well confess it. Just now, when we were all in the wrong, you had courage enough, not only to refuse to join us, but to tell us of our fault."

"That is true enough; and the fair-faced girl must have had a pretty stock of courage to tell us the truth so plainly to our faces."

"But, bless you, these blue-eyed people, who look so soft and gentle, if once they are worked up — "

"They become courageous as lions."

"Poor Mont Saint-Jean! She has good reason to be thankful to her!"

"What she says is true enough. We could not injure the mother without harming the child also."

"I never thought of that."

"Nor I either."

"But you see La Goualeuse did, — she never forgets anything."

"The idea of hurting an infant! horrible! Is it not?"

"I'm sure there is not one of us would do it for anything that could be offered us."

Nothing is more variable than popular passion, or more abrupt than its rapid transition from bad to good, and even the reverse. The simple yet touching arguments of Fleur-de-Marie had effected a powerful reaction in favour of Mont Saint-Jean, who shed tears of deep joy. Every heart seemed moved; for, as we have already said, the womanly feelings of the prisoners had been awakened, and they now felt a solicitude for the unhappy creature in proportion as they had formerly held her in dislike and contempt. All at once, La Louve, violent and impetuous in all her actions, twisted the little cap she held in her hand into a sort of purse, and feeling in her pocket brought out twenty sous, which

she threw into the purse; then presenting it to her companions, exclaimed:

"Here is my twenty sous towards buying baby clothes for Mont Saint-Jean's child. We will cut them out and make them ourselves, in order that the work may cost nothing."

"Oh, yes, let us."

"To be sure, — let us all join!"

"I will for one."

"What a capital idea!"

"Poor creature!"

"Though she is so frightfully ugly, yet she has a mother's feelings the same as another."

"La Goualeuse was right. It is really enough to make one cry one's eyes out, to see what a wretched collection of rags the poor creature has scraped together for her baby."

"Well, I'll give thirty sous."

"And I ten."

"I'll give twenty sous."

"I've only got four sous, but I'll give them."

"I have no money at all; but I'll sell my allowance for to-morrow, and put whatever any one will give for it into the collection. Who'll buy my to-morrow's rations?"

"I will," said La Louve. "So, here I put in ten sous for you; but you shall keep your rations. And now, Mont Saint-Jean shall have baby clothes fit for a princess."

To express the joy and gratitude of Mont Saint-Jean would be wholly impossible. The most intense delight and happiness illumined her countenance, and rendered even her usual hideous features interesting. Fleur-de-Marie was almost as happy, though compelled to say, when La Louve handed to her the collecting-cap:

"I am very sorry I have not a single sou of money, but I will work as long as you please at making the clothes."

"Oh, my dear heavenly angel!" cried Mont Saint-Jean, throwing herself on her knees before La Goualeuse, and striving to kiss her hand. "What have I ever done to merit such goodness on your part, or the charity of these kind ladies? Gracious Father! Do I hear aright? Baby things! and all nice and comfortable for my child! A real, proper set of baby clothes! Everything I can require! Who would ever have thought of such a thing? I am sure I never should. I shall lose my senses with joy! Only to think that a poor, miserable wretch like myself, the make-game of everybody, should all at once, just because you spoke a few soft, sweet words out of that heavenly mouth, have such wonderful blessings! See how your words have changed those who meant to harm me, but who now pity me and are my friends; and I feel as though I could never thank them enough, or express my gratitude! Oh, how very, very kind of them! How wrong of me to be offended and angry with what they said! How stupid and ungrateful I must have been not to perceive that they were only playing with me, — that they had no intention of harming me. Oh, no! It was all meant for my good. Here is a proof of it. Oh, for the future, if they like to knock me about ever so, I will not so much as cry out! Oh, I was too impatient when I complained before; but I will make up for it next time!"

"Eighty-eight francs seven sous!" said La Louve, finishing her reckoning of the collection gathered by handing about the little bonnet. "Who will be treasurer till we lay out the money? We must not entrust it to Mont Saint-Jean, she is too simple."

"Let La Goualeuse take charge of it!" cried a unanimous burst of voices.

"No," said Fleur-de-Marie; "the best way will be to beg of the inspectress, Madame Armand, to take charge of the sum collected, and to buy the necessary articles for Mont Saint-Jean's confinement; and then, — who

knows? — perhaps Madame Armand may take notice of the good action you have performed, and report it, so as to be the means of shortening the imprisonment of all whose names are mentioned as being concerned in it. Tell me, La Louve," added Fleur-de-Marie, taking her companion by the arm, "are you not better satisfied with yourself than you were just now, when you were throwing about all Mont Saint-Jean's poor baby's things?"

La Louve did not immediately reply. To the generous excitement which a few moments before animated her features, succeeded a sort of half savage air of defiance. Unable to comprehend the cause of this sudden change, Fleur-de-Marie looked at her with surprise.

"Come here, La Goualeuse," said La Louve at last, with a gloomy tone; "I want to speak to you."

Then abruptly quitting the other prisoners, she led Fleur-de-Marie to a reservoir of water, surrounded by a stone coping, which had been hollowed out in the midst of an adjoining meadow. Near the water was a bench, also of stone, on which La Louve and La Goualeuse placed themselves, and were thus, in a manner, beyond the observation or hearing of their companions.

CHAPTER XI.

LA LOUVE AND LA GOUALEUSE.

We firmly believe in the influence of certain master minds so far sympathising with the masses, so powerful over them as to impose on them the bias of good or evil. Some, bold, enthusiastic, indomitable, addressing themselves to the worst passions, will rouse them, as the storm raises the foam of the sea; but, like all tempests, these are as ephemeral as they are furious; to these terrible effervescences will succeed the sullen reversion of sadness and restlessness, which will obtain supremacy over the most miserable conditions. The reaction of violence is always severe; the waking after an excess is always painful.

La Louve, if you will, personifies this fatal influence.

Other organisations, more rare, because their generous instincts must be fertilised by intelligence, and with them the mind is on an equality with the heart, — others, we say, will inspire good, as well as some inspire evil. Their wholesome influence will gently penetrate into the soul, as the warm rays of the sun penetrate the body with invigorating heat, as the arid and burning earth imbibes the fresh and grateful dew of night

Fleur-de-Marie, if you will, personifies this benevolent influence.

The reaction to good is not so sudden as the reaction to evil; its effects are more protracted. It is something delicious, inexplicable, which gradually extends itself,

calms and soothes the most hardened heart, and gives it the feeling of inexpressible serenity. Unfortunately the charm ceases.

After having seen celestial brightness, ill-disposed persons fall back into the darkness of their habitual life; the recollections of sweet emotions which have for a moment surprised them are gradually effaced. Still they sometimes seek vaguely to recall them, even as we try to murmur out the songs with which our happy infancy was cradled. Thanks to the good action with which she had inspired them, the companions of La Goualeuse had tasted of the passing sweetness of these feelings, in which even La Louve had participated; but this latter, for reasons we shall describe hereafter, remained a shorter time than the other prisoners under this benevolent feeling. If we are surprised to hear and see Fleur-de-Marie, hitherto so passively, so painfully resigned, act and speak with courage and authority, it was because the noble precepts she had imbibed during her residence at the farm at Bouqueval had rapidly developed the rare qualities of her admirable disposition. Fleur-de-Marie understood that it is not sufficient to bewail the irreparable past, and that it is only in doing or inspiring good that a reinstatement can be hoped for.

We have said that La Louve was sitting on a wooden bench, beside La Goualeuse. The close proximity of these two young girls offered a singular contrast.

The pale rays of a winter sun were shed over them; the pure sky was speckled in places with small, white, and fleecy clouds; some birds, enlivened by the warmth of the temperature, were warbling in the black branches of the large chestnut-trees in the yard; two or three sparrows, more bold than their fellows, came and drank in a small rivulet formed by the overflow of the basin; the green moss covered the stones of the fountain, and between their joints, here and there, were tufts of grass

and some small creepers, spared by the frost. This description of a prison-basin may seem puerile; but Fleur-de-Marie did not lose one of the details, but with her eyes fixed mournfully on the little verdant corner, and on this limpid water in which the moving whiteness of the clouds over the azure of the heavens was reflected, in which the golden rays of a lovely sun broke with beautiful lustre, she thought with a sigh of the magnificence of the Nature which she loved, which she admired so poetically, and of which she was still deprived.

"What did you wish to say to me?" asked La Goualeuse of her companion, who, seated beside her, was gloomy and silent.

"We must have an explanation," said La Louve, sternly; "things cannot go on as they are."

"I do not understand you, La Louve."

"Just now, in the yard, referring to Mont Saint-Jean, I said to myself, 'I won't give way any more to La Goualeuse,' and yet I do give way now."

"But —"

"But I tell you it cannot continue so."

"In what have I offended you, La Louve?"

"Why, I am not the same person I was when you came here; no, I have neither courage, strength, nor boldness."

Then suddenly checking herself, La Louve pulled up the sleeve of her gown, and showing La Goualeuse her white arm, powerful, and covered with black down, she showed her, on the upper part of it, an indelible tattooing, representing a blue dagger half plunged in a red heart; over this emblem were these words:

MORT AUX LÂCHES!
MARTIAL
P. L. V. (*pour la vie.*)
(DEATH TO COWARDS!
MARTIAL
FOR LIFE!)

"Do you see that?" asked La Louve.

"Yes; and it is so shocking, it quite frightens me," said La Goualeuse, turning away her head.

"When Martial, my lover, wrote, with a red-hot needle, these words on my arm, 'Death to Cowards!' he thought me brave; if he knew my behaviour for the last three days, he would stick his knife in my body, as this dagger is driven into this heart, — and he would be right, for he wrote here, 'Death to Cowards!' and I am a coward."

"What have you done that is cowardly?"

"Everything."

"Do you regret the good resolution you made just now?"

"Yes."

"I cannot believe you."

"I say I do regret it, — for it is another proof of what you can do with all of us. Didn't you understand what Mont Saint-Jean meant when she went on her knees to thank you?"

"What did she say?"

"She said, speaking of you, that with nothing you turned us from evil to good. I could have throttled her when she said it, for, to our shame, it was true. Yes, in no time you change us from black to white. We listen to you, — give way to our first feelings, and are your dupes, as we were just now."

"My dupe! for having generously succoured this poor woman?"

"Oh, it has nothing to do with all that," exclaimed La Louve, with rage. "I have never till now stooped my head before a breathing soul. La Louve is my name, and I am well named: more than one woman bears my marks, and more than one man, too; and it shall never be said that a little chit like you can place me beneath her feet."

"Me! and in what way?"

"How do I know! You come here, and first begin by insulting me."

"Insult you?"

"Yes, — you ask who'll have your bread. I first say — *I.* Mont Saint-Jean did not ask for it till afterwards, and yet you give her the preference. Enraged at that, I rushed at you with my uplifted knife — "

"And I said to you, 'Kill me, if you like, but do not let me linger long,' and that is all."

"That is all? Yes, that is all. And yet these words made me drop my knife, — made me — ask your pardon, — yes, pardon of you who insulted me. Is that natural? Why, when I recovered my senses, I was ashamed of myself. The evening you came here, when you were on your knees to say your prayers, — why, instead of making game of you, and setting all the dormitory on you, did I say, 'Let her alone; she prays, and has a right to pray?' Then the next day, why were I and all the others ashamed to dress ourselves before you?"

"I do not know, La Louve."

"Indeed!" replied the violent creature, with irony. "You don't know! Why, no doubt, it is because, as we have all of us said, jokingly, that you are of a different sort from us. You think so, don't you?"

"I have never said that I thought so."

"No, you have not said so; but you behave just as if it were so."

"I beg of you to listen to me."

"No, I have been already too foolish to listen to you — to look at you. Till now, I never envied any one. Well, two or three times I have been surprised at myself. Am I growing a fool or a coward? I have found myself envious of your face, so like the Holy Virgin's; of your gentle and mournful look. Yes, I have even been envious of your chestnut hair and your blue eyes. I, who detest fair women, because I am dark

myself, wish to resemble you. I! La Louve! I! Why, it is but eight days since, and I would have marked any one who dared but say so. Yet it is not your lot that would tempt one, for you are as full of grief as a Magdalene. Is it natural, I say, eh?"

"How can I account to you for the impression I make upon you?"

"Oh, you know well enough what you do, though you look as if you were too delicate to be touched."

"What bad design can you suppose me capable of?"

"How can I tell? It is because I do not understand anything of all this that I mistrust you. Another thing, too: until now I have always been merry or passionate, and never thoughtful, but you — you have made me thoughtful. Yes, there are words which you utter, that, in spite of myself, have shaken my very heart, and made me think of all sorts of sad things."

"I am sorry, La Louve, if I ever made you sad; but I do not remember ever having said anything —"

"Oh," cried La Louve, interrupting her companion with angry impatience, "what you do is sometimes as affecting as what you say! You are so clever!"

"Do not be angry, La Louve, but explain what you mean."

"Yesterday, in the workroom, I noticed you, — you bent your head over the work you were sewing, and a large tear fell on your hand. You looked at it for a minute, and then you lifted your hand to your lips, as if to kiss and wipe it away. Is this true?"

"Yes," said La Goualeuse, blushing.

"There was nothing in this; but at the moment you looked so unhappy, so very miserable, that I felt my very heart turned, as it were, inside out. Tell me, do you find this amusing? Why, now, I have been as hard as flint on all occasions. No one ever saw me shed a tear, — and yet, only looking at your chit face, I felt my heart sink

basely within me! Yes, for this is baseness, — pure cowardice; and the proof is, that for three days I have not dared to write to Martial, my lover, my conscience is so bad. Yes, being with you has enfeebled my mind, and this must be put an end to, — there's enough of it; this will else do me mischief, I am sure. I wish to remain as I am, and not become a joke and despised thing to myself."

"You are angry with me, La Louve?"

"Yes, you are a bad acquaintance for me; and if it continues, why, in a fortnight's time, instead of calling me the She-wolf, they would call me the Ewe! But no, thank ye, it sha'n't come to that yet, — Martial would kill me; and so, to make an end of this matter, I will break up all acquaintance with you; and that I may be quite separated from you, I shall ask to be put in another room. If they refuse me, I will do some piece of mischief to put me in wind again, and that I may be sent to the black-hole for the remainder of my time here. And this was what I had to say to you, Goualeuse."

Timidly taking her companion's hand, who looked at her with gloomy distrust, Fleur-de-Marie said:

"I am sure, La Louve, that you take an interest in me, not because you are cowardly, but because you are generous-hearted. Brave hearts are the only ones which sympathise in the misfortunes of others."

"There is neither generosity nor courage in it," said La Louve, coarsely; "it is downright cowardice. Besides, I don't choose to have it said that I sympathise with any one. It ain't true."

"Then I will not say so, La Louve; but since you have taken an interest in me, you will let me feel grateful to you, will you not?"

"Oh, if you like! This evening, I shall be in another room than yours, or alone in the dark hole, and I shall soon be out, thank God!"

"And where shall you go when you leave here?"

"Why, home, to be sure, to the Rue Pierre-Lescat. I have my furniture there."

"And Martial?" said La Goualeuse, who hoped to keep up the conversation with La Louve, by interesting her in what she most cared for; "shall you be glad to see him again?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" she replied, with a passionate air. "When I was taken up, he was just recovering from an illness, — a fever which he had from being always in the water. For seventeen days and seventeen nights I never left him for a moment, and I sold half my kit in order to pay the doctor, the drags and all. I may boast of that, and I do boast of it. If my man lives, it is I who saved him. Yesterday I burnt another candle for him. It is folly, — a mere whim, — but yet it is all one, and we have sometimes very good effects in burning candles for a person's recovery."

"And, Martial, where is he now? What is he doing?"

"He is still on an island, near the bridge, at Asnières."

"On an island?"

"Yes, he is settled there, with his family, in a lone house. He is always at loggerheads with the persons who protect the fishing; but when he is once in his boat, with his double-barrelled gun, why, they who approach him had better look out!" said La Louve, proudly.

"What, then, is his occupation?"

"He poaches in the night; and then, as he is as bold as a lion, when some coward wishes to get up a quarrel with another, why, he will lend his hand."

"Where did you first know Martial?"

"At Paris. He wished to be a locksmith, — a capital business, — always with red-hot iron and fire around you; dangerous you may suppose, but then that suited him. But he, like me, was badly disposed, and could not agree with his master; and then, too, they were always throw-

ing his father and one of his brothers in his teeth. But that's nothing to you. The end of it was, that he returned to his mother, who is a very devil in sin and wickedness, and began to poach on the river. He cannot see me at Paris, and in the daytime I go to see him in his island, the Ile du Ravageur, near Asnières. It's very near; though if it were farther off, I would go all the same, even if I went on my hands and knees, or swam all the way, for I can swim like an otter."

"You must be very happy to go into the country," said La Goualeuse, with a sigh; "especially if you are as fond as I am of walking in the fields."

"I prefer walking in the woods and large forests with my man."

"In the forests! Oh, ain't you afraid?"

"Afraid! Oh, yes, afraid! I should think so! What can a she-wolf fear? The thicker and more lonely the forest, the better I should like it. A lone hut in which I should live with Martial as a poacher, to go with him at night to set the snares for the game, and then, if the keepers came to apprehend us, to fire at them, both of us, whilst my man and I were hid in underwood,—ah, that would indeed be happiness!"

"Then you have lived in the woods, La Louve?"

"Never."

"Who gave you these ideas, then?"

"Martial."

"How did he acquire them?"

"He was a poacher in the forest of Rambouillet; and it is not a year ago that he was supposed to have fired at a keeper who had fired at him, the vagabond! However, there was no proof of the fact, but Martial was obliged to leave that part of the country. Then he came to Paris to try and be a locksmith, and then I first saw him. As he was too wild to be on good terms with his master, he preferred returning to his relations at Asnières, and poach in the river; it is not so slavish.

Still he always regrets the woods, and some day or other will return to them. From his talking to me of poaching and forests, he has crammed my head with these ideas, and I now think that is the life I was born for. But it is always so. What your man likes, you like. If Martial had been a thief, I should have been a thief. When one has a man, we like to be like him."

"And where are your own relations, La Louve?"

"How should I know?"

"Is it long since you saw them?"

"I don't know whether they are dead or alive."

"Were they, then, so very unkind to you?"

"Neither kind nor unkind. I was about eleven years old, I think, when my mother went off with a soldier. My father, who was a day-labourer, brought home a mistress with him into our garret, and two boys she had, — one six, and the other my own age. She was a barrow-woman. She went on pretty well at first, but after a time, whilst she was out with her fruit, a fish-woman used to come and drink with my father, and this the apple-woman found out. Then, from this time, every evening, we had such battles and rows in the house that I and the two boys were half dead with fright. We all three slept together, for we had but one room. One day, — it was her birthday, Sainte Madeleine's fête, — and she scolded him because he had not congratulated her on it. From one word another arose, and my father concluded by breaking her head with the handle of the broom. I really thought he had killed her. She fell like a lump of lead, but *la mère* Madeleine was hard-lived, and hard-headed also. After that she returned my father with interest all the blows he had given her, and once bit him so savagely in the hand that the piece of flesh remained between her teeth. I must say that these contests were what we may call the *grandes eaux* at Versailles. On common and working-

days the skirmishes were of a lighter sort, — there were bruises, but no blood."

"Was this woman unkind to you?"

"Mère Madeleine? No; on the contrary. She was a little hasty, but, otherwise, a good sort of woman enough. But at last my father got tired, and left her and the little furniture we had. He came out of Burgundy, and most probably returned to his own country. I was fifteen or sixteen at this time."

"And were you still with the old mistress of your father?"

"Where else should I be? Then she took up with a tiler, who came to lodge with us. Of the two boys of Mère Madeleine, one, the eldest, was drowned at the Ile des Cygnes, and the other went apprentice to a carpenter."

"And what did you do with this woman?"

"Oh, I helped to draw her barrow, made the soup, and carried her man his dinner; and when he came home drunk, which happened oftener than was his turn, I helped Mère Madeleine to keep him in order, for we still lived in the same apartment. He was as vicious as a sandy-haired donkey, when he was tipsy, and tried to kill us. Once, if we had not snatched his axe from him, he would certainly have murdered us both. Mère Madeleine had a cut on the shoulder, which bled till the room looked like a slaughter-house."

"And how did you become — what — we — are?" said Fleur-de-Marie, hesitatingly.

"Why, little Charley, Madeleine's son, who was afterwards drowned at the Ile des Cygnes, was my first lover, almost from the time when he, his mother, and his brother, came to lodge with us when we were but mere children; after him the tiler was my lover, who threatened else to turn me out-of-doors. I was afraid that Mère Madeleine would also send me away if she discovered anything. She did, however; but as she was

really a good creature, she said, 'As it is so, and you are sixteen years old, and fit for nothing, for you are too self-willed to take a situation or learn a business, you shall go with me and be inscribed in the police-books; as you have no relations, I will answer for you, as I brought you up, as one may say; and that will give you a position authorised by the government, and you will have nothing to do but to be merry and dress smart. I shall have no uneasiness about you, and you will no longer be a charge to me. What do you say to it, my girl?' 'Why, I think indeed you are right,' was my answer; 'I had not thought of that.' Well, we went to the Bureau des Mœurs. She answered for me, in the usual way, and from that time I was *inscrite*. I met Mère Madeleine a year afterwards. I was drinking with my man, and we asked her to join us, and she told us that the tiler had been sentenced to the galleys. Since then I have never seen her, but some one, I don't remember who, declared that she had been seen at the Morgue three months ago. If it were true, really so much the worse, for Mère Madeleine was a good sort of woman, — her heart was in her hand, and she had no more gall than a pigeon."

Fleur-de-Marie, though plunged young in an atmosphere of corruption, had subsequently breathed so pure an air that she experienced a deeply painful sensation at the horrid recital of La Louve. And if we have had the sad courage to make it, it has been because all the world should know that, hideous as it is, it is still a thousand times less revolting than other countless realities.

Ignorance and misery often conduct the lower classes to these fearful degradations, human and social.

Yes; there is a crowd of hovels and dens, where children and adults, girls and boys, legitimate children and bastards, lying pell-mell on the same mattress, have continually before their eyes these infamous examples

of drunkenness, violence, debauch, and murder. Yes, and too frequently unnatural crimes at the tenderest age add to this accumulation of horrors.

The rich may shroud their vices in shadow and mystery, and respect the sanctity of the domestic hearth, but the most honest artisans, occupying nearly always a single chamber with their family, are compelled, from want of beds and space, to make their children sleep together, sons and daughters, close to themselves, husbands and wives.

If we shudder at the fatal consequences of such necessity almost inevitably imposed on poor, but honest artisans, what must it be with workpeople depraved by ignorance or misconduct? What fearful examples do they not present to unhappy children, abandoned, or rather excited, from their tenderest youth to every brutal impulse and animal propensity? Have they even the idea of what is right, decent, and modest? Must they not be as strange to social laws as the savages of the New World? Poor creatures! Corrupted at their very birth, who in the prisons, whither their wanderings and idleness often lead them, are already stigmatised by the coarse and terrible metaphor, "Graines de Bagne" (Seeds of the Gaol)! and the metaphor is a correct one. This sinister prediction is almost invariably accomplished: the Galleys or the Bridewell, each sex has its destiny.

We do not intend here to justify any profligacy. Let us only compare the voluntary degradation of a female carefully educated in the bosom of a wealthy family, which has set her none but the most virtuous examples. Let us compare, we say, this degradation with that of La Louve, a creature, as it were, reared in vice, by vice, and for vice, and to whom is pointed out, not without reason, prostitution as a condition protected by the government! This is true. There is a bureau where she is registered, certificated, and signs her name. A bureau

where a mother has a right to authorise the prostitution of her daughter; a husband the prostitution of his wife. This place is termed the "Bureau des Mœurs" (the Office of Manners). Must not society have a vice most deeply rooted, incurable in the place of the laws which regulate marriage, when power, — yes, power, — that grave and moral abstraction, is obliged, not only to tolerate, but to regulate, to legalise, to protect, to render it less injurious and dangerous, this sale of body and soul; which, multiplied by the unbridled appetites of an immense population, acquires daily an almost incalculable amount.

Goualeuse, repressing the emotion which this sad confession of her companion had made in her, said to her, timidly:

"Listen to me without being angry."

"Well, what have you to say? I think I have gossiped enough; but it is no matter, as it is the last time we shall talk together."

"Are you happy, La Louve?"

"What do you mean?"

"Does the life you lead make you happy?"

"Here, — at St. Lazare?"

"No; when you are at home and free."

"Yes, I am happy."

"Always?"

"Always."

"You would not change your life for any other?"

"For any other? What — what other life can there be for me?"

"Tell me, La Louve," continued Fleur-de-Marie, after a moment's silence, "don't you sometimes like to build castles in the air? It is so amusing in prison."

"Castles in the air! About what?"

"About Martial."

"About my man?"

"Yes."

"*Ma foi!* I never built any."

"Let me build one for you and Martial."

"Bah! What's the use of it?"

"To pass away time."

"Well, let's have your castle in the air."

"Well, then, only imagine that a lucky chance, such as sometimes occurs, brings you in contact with a person who says, 'Forsaken by your father and mother, your infancy was surrounded by such bad examples that you must be pitied, as much as blamed, for having become —'"

"Become what?"

"What you and I have become," replied Goualeuse, in a soft voice; and then she continued, "Suppose, then, that this person were to say to you, 'You love Martial; he loves you. Do you and he cease to lead an improper life, — instead of being his mistress, become his wife.'"

La Louve shrugged her shoulders.

"Do you think he would have me for his wife?"

"Except poaching, he has never committed any guilty act, has he?"

"No; he is a poacher in the river, as he was in the woods, and he is right. Why, now, ain't fish like game, for those to have who can catch them? Where do they bear the proprietor's mark?"

"Well, suppose that, having given up the dangerous trade of marauding on the river, he desires to become an honest man; suppose he inspires, by the frankness of his good resolutions, so much confidence in an unknown benefactor that he gives him a situation, — let us see, our castle is in the air, — gives him a situation — say as gamekeeper, for instance. Why, I should suppose that, as he had been a poacher, nothing could better suit his taste; it is the same occupation, but in the right way."

"Yes, *ma foi!* it would be still to live in the woods."

"Only he would not have the situation but on condition that he would marry you, and take you with him."

"I go with Martial?"

"Yes; why, you said you should be so happy to live together in the depths of the forest. Shouldn't you prefer, instead of the miserable hut of the poacher, in which you would hide like guilty creatures, to have a neat little cottage, which you would take care of as the active and hard-working housekeeper?"

"You are making game of me. Can this be possible?"

"Who knows what may happen? But it's only a castle in the air."

"Ah, if it's only that, all very well!"

"La Louve, I think that I already see you established in your little home in the depths of the forest, with your husband and two or three children. Children, — what happiness! Are they not?"

"The children of my man!" exclaimed La Louve, with intense eagerness. "Ah, yes! They would be dearly loved, — they would!"

"How they would keep you company in your solitude! And, then, when they grew up they would be able to render you great service: the youngest would pick up the dead branches for fuel; the eldest would go into the grass of the forest to watch a cow or two, which they would give you as a reward for your husband's activity, for as he had been a poacher he would make a better keeper."

"To be sure; that's true enough. But really your castles in the air are very amusing. Go on, Goualeuse."

"They would be very much satisfied with your husband, and you would have some allowances from your master, a poultry-yard, a garden; and, in fact, you would have to work very hard, La Louve, from morning till night."

"Oh, if that were all, if I once had my good man near me, I should not be afraid of work! I have stout arms."

"And you would have plenty to employ them, I will answer for that. There is so much to do, — so much to do! There is the stable to clean, the meals to get ready, the clothes to mend; to-day is washing day, next day there's the bread to bake, or perhaps the house to clean from top to bottom; and, then, the other keepers would say, 'There is no such manager as Martial's wife; from the cellar to the garret, in her house, it is a pattern of cleanliness, and the children are taken such care of! But then she is so very industrious, Madame Martial.'"

"Really though, La Goualeuse, is it true? I should call myself Madame Martial," said La Louve, with a sort of pride, — "Madame Martial!"

"Which is better than being called La Louve, — is it not?"

"*Pardieu!* Why, there's no doubt but I should rather be called by my man's name than the name of a wild beast; but — bah! — bah! *louve* I was born, *louve* I shall die!"

"Who knows? Who can say? Not to shrink from a life that is hard, but honest, will ensure success. So, then, work would not frighten you?"

"Oh, certainly not! It is not a husband and four or five brats to take care of that would give me any trouble!"

"But then it would not be all work; there are moments for rest. In the winter evenings, when the children were put to bed, and your husband smoked his pipe whilst he was cleaning his gun or caressing his dogs, you would have a little leisure."

"Leisure, — sit with my arms crossed before me! *Ma foi!* No, I would rather mend the linen, by the side of the fire in the evening. That is not a very hard job, and in winter the days are so short."

As Fleur-de-Marie proceeded, La Louve forgot more and more of the present for the dreams of the future, as deeply interested as La Goualeuse had been before her, when Rodolph had talked to her of the rustic delights of

the Bouqueval farm. La Louve did not attempt to conceal the wild tastes with which her lover had inspired her. Remembering the deep and wholesome impression which she had experienced from the smiling picture of Rodolph in relation to a country life, Fleur-de-Marie was desirous of trying the same means of action on La Louve, thinking, with reason, that, if her companion was so far affected at the sketch of a rude, poor, and solitary life, as to desire ardently such an existence, she merited interest and pity. Delighted to see her companion listen to her with attention, La Goualeuse continued, smiling:

"And then you see, Madame Martial, — let me call you so, — what does it matter — "

"Quite the contrary; it flatters me." Then La Louve shrugged her shoulders, and, smiling, also added, "What folly to play at madame! Are we children? Well, it's all the same; go on, — it's quite amusing. You said — "

"I was saying, Madame Martial, that in speaking of your life, the winter in the thickest of the woods, we were only alluding to the worst of the seasons."

"*Ma foi!* No, that is not the worst. To hear the wind whistle all night in the forest, and the wolves howl from time to time far off, very far off, — I shouldn't tire of that; provided I was at the fireside with my man and my children, or even quite alone, if my man was going his rounds. Ah, I am not afraid of a gun! If I had my children to defend, I could do that, — the wolf would guard her cubs!"

"Oh, I can well believe you! You are very brave — you are; but I am a coward. I prefer spring to the winter, when the leaves are green, when the pretty wild flowers bloom, and they smell so sweet, so sweet that the air is quite scented; and then your children would roll about so merrily in the fresh grass; and then the forest would be so thick that you could hardly see your house in the midst of the foliage, — I can fancy that I see it now. In front of the house is a vine full of leaves, which

your husband has planted, and which shades the bank of turf where he sleeps during the noonday heat, whilst you are going backwards and forwards desiring the children not to wake their father. I don't know whether you have remarked it, but in the heat of summer about midday there is in the woods as deep silence as at midnight, you don't hear the leaves shake, nor the birds sing."

"Yes, that's true," replied La Louve, almost mechanically, who became more and more forgetful of the reality, and almost believed she saw before her the smiling pictures which the poetical imagination of Fleur-de-Marie, so instinctively amorous of the beauties of nature, presented before her.

Delighted at the deep attention which her companion lent her, La Goualeuse continued, allowing herself to be drawn on by the charm of the thoughts which she called up:

"There is one thing which I love almost as well as the silence of the woods, and that is the noise of the heavy drops of rain falling on the leaves; do you like that, too?"

"Oh, yes! I am very fond of a summer shower."

"So am I; and when the trees, the moss, and the grass, are all moistened, what a delightfully fresh odour they give out! And then, how the sun, as it passes over the trees, makes all the little drops of water glisten as they hang from the leaves! Have you ever noticed that?"

"Yes; I remember it now because you tell me of it. Yet, how droll all this is! But, Goualeuse, you talk so well that one seems to see everything, — to see everything just as you talk; and then, I really do not know how to explain it all. But now, what you say seems good, it is quite pleasant, — just like the rain we were talking of."

"Oh, don't suppose that we are the only creatures who love a summer shower! The dear little birds, how delighted they are! How they shake their feathers, whilst

they warble so joyously; not more joyously, though, than your children, — your children as free, and gay, and light-hearted as they! And then, look! as the day declines the youngest children run across the wood to meet the elder, who brings back the two heifers from pasture, for they have heard the tinkling of the bell in the distance!"

"Yes, Goualeuse, and I think I see the smallest and boldest, whom his brother has put astride on the back of one of the cows."

"And one would say that the poor animal knows what burden she bears, she steps so carefully. But it is supper-time; your eldest child, whilst he has been tending the cows at pasture, has amused himself with gathering for you a basket of beautiful strawberries, which he has brought quite fresh under a thick covering of wild violets."

"Strawberries and violets, — ah, what a lovely smell they have! But where the deuce did you find all these ideas, La Goualeuse?"

"In the woods, where the strawberries ripen and the violets blow, you have only to look and gather them — But let us go on with our housekeeping. It is night, and you must milk your heifers, prepare your supper under the shelter of the vine, for you hear your husband's dogs bark, and then their master's voice, who, tired as he is, comes home singing, — and who could not sing when on a fine summer's eve with cheerful heart you return to the house where a good wife and five children are waiting for you? — eh, Madame Martial?"

"True, true; one could not but sing," replied La Louve, becoming more and more thoughtful.

"Unless one weeps for joy," continued Fleur-de-Marie, herself much touched, "and such tears are as sweet as songs. And then, when night has completely come, what a pleasure to sit in the arbour and enjoy the calmness of a fine evening, to breathe the sweet odour of the

forest, to hear the prattle of the children, to look at the stars, then the heart is so full, — so full that it must pour out its prayer; it must thank him to whom we are indebted for the freshness of the evening, the sweet scent of the woods, the gentle brightness of the starry sky! After this thanksgiving or this prayer, we go to sleep tranquilly till the next day, and then again thank our Creator. And this poor, hard-working, but calm and honest life, is the same each and every day."

"Every day!" repeated La Louve, with her head drooping on her chest, her look fixed, her breast oppressed, "for it is true the good God is good to give us wherewithal to live upon, and to make us happy with so little."

"Well, tell me now," continued Fleur-de-Marie, gently, —"tell me, ought not he to be blessed, after God, who should give you this peaceable and laborious life, instead of the wretched existence you lead in the mud of the streets of Paris?"

This word Paris suddenly recalled La Louve to reality.

A strange phenemenon had taken place in the mind of this creature.

The simple painting of a humble and rude condition — the mere recital by turns — lighted up by the soft rays from the domestic hearth, gilded by some joyful sunbeams, refreshed by the breeze of the great woods, or perfumed by the odour of wild flowers, — this narrative had made on La Louve a more profound or more sensible impression than could an exhortation of the most pious morality have effected.

In truth, in proportion as Fleur-de-Marie spoke, La Louve had longed to be, and meant to be, an indefatigable manager, a worthy wife, an affectionate and devoted mother.

To inspire, even for an instant, a violent, immoral, and degraded woman with a love of home, respect for duty, a taste for labour, and gratitude towards her

Creator; and that, by only promising her what God gives to all, the sun, the sky, and the depths of the forest, — what society owes to those who lack a roof and a loaf, — was, indeed, a glorious triumph for Fleur-de-Marie! Could the most severe moralist — the most overpowering preacher — have obtained more in threatening, in their monotonous and menacing orations, all human vengeances — all divine thunders?

The painful anger with which La Louve was possessed when she returned to the reality, after having allowed herself to be charmed by the new and wholesome reverie in which, for the first time, Fleur-de-Marie had plunged her, proved the influence of her words on her unfortunate companion. The more bitter were La Louve's regrets when she fell back from this consoling delusion to the horrors of her real position, the greater was La Goualeuse's triumph. After a moment's silence and reflection, La Louve raised her head suddenly, passed her hand over her brow, and rose threatening and angry.

"See, see! I had reason to mistrust you, and to desire not to listen to you, because it would turn to ill for me! Why did you talk thus to me? Why make a jest of me? Why mock me? And because I have been so weak as to say to you that I should like to live in the depths of a forest with my man. Who are you, then, that you should make a fool of me in this way? You, miserable girl, don't know what you have done! Now, in spite of myself, I shall always be thinking of this forest, the house, and — and — the children — and all that happiness which I shall never have — never — never! And if I cannot forget what you have told me, why, my life will be one eternal punishment, — a hell, — and that by your fault! Yes, by your fault!"

"So much the better! Oh, so much the better!" said Fleur-de-Marie.

"You say, so much the better!" exclaimed La Louve, with her eyes glaring.

"Yes, — so much the better! For if your present miserable life appears to you a hell, you will prefer that of which I have spoken to you."

"What is the use of preferring it, since it is not destined for me? What is the use of regretting that I walk the streets, since I shall die in the streets?" exclaimed La Louve, more and more irritated, and taking in her powerful grasp the small hand of Fleur-de-Marie. "Answer — answer! Why do you try to make me desire that which I cannot have."

"To desire an honest and industrious life is to be worthy of that life, as I have already told you," replied Fleur-de-Marie, without attempting to disengage her hand.

"Well, and what then? Suppose I am worthy, what does that prove? How much the better off will that make me?"

"To see realised what you consider as a dream," answered Fleur-de-Marie, in a tone so serious and full of conviction that La Louve, again under control, let go La Goualeuse's hand, and gazed at her in amazement.

"Listen to me, La Louve," said Fleur-de-Marie, in a voice full of feeling; "do you think me so wicked as to excite such ideas and hopes in you, if I were not sure that, whilst I made you blush at your present condition, I gave you the means to quit it?"

"You! You can do this?"

"I! No; but some one who is good, and great, and powerful."

"Great and powerful?"

"Listen, La Louve. Three months ago I was, like you, a lost, an abandoned creature. One day he of whom I speak to you with tears of gratitude,"— and Fleur-de-Marie wiped her eyes, — "one day he came to me, and he was not afraid, abased and despised as I was, to say comforting words to me, the first I had ever heard. I told him my sufferings, my miseries, my shame; I con-

cealed nothing from him, just as you have related to me all your past life, La Louve. After having listened to me with kindness, he did not blame, but pitied me; he did not even reproach me with my disgraceful position, but talked to me of the calm and pure life which was found in the country."

"As you did just now?"

"Then my situation appeared to me the more frightful, in proportion as the future he held out to me seemed more beautiful."

"Like me?"

"Yes, and so I said as you did, — What use, alas! is it to make me fancy this paradise, — me, who am chained to hell? But I was wrong to despair; for he of whom I speak is so good, so just, that he is incapable of making a false hope shine in the eyes of a poor creature who asked no one for pity, happiness, or hope."

"And what did he do for you?"

"He treated me like a sick child. I was, like you, immersed in a corrupted air, and he sent me to breathe a wholesome and reviving atmosphere. I was also living amongst hideous and criminal beings, and he confided me to persons as good as himself, who have purified my soul and elevated my mind; for he communicates to all those who love and respect him a spark of his own refined intelligence. Yes, if my words move you, La Louve, if my tears make your tears flow, it is that his mind and thought inspire me. If I speak to you of the happier future which you will obtain by repentance, it is because I can promise you this future in his name, although, at this moment, he is ignorant of the engagement I make. In fact, I say to you, Hope! because he always listens to the voice of those who desire to become better; for God sent him on earth to make people believe in his providence!"

As she spoke, Fleur-de-Marie's countenance became radiant, and her pale cheeks suffused with a delicate car-

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nation; her beautiful eyes sparkled, and she appeared so touchingly beautiful that La Louve gazed on her with respectful admiration, and said:

"Where am I? Do I dream? Who are you, then? Oh, I was right when I said you were not one of us! But, then, you talk so well, — you, who can do so much, you, who know such powerful people, how is it that you are here, a prisoner with us?"

Fleur-de-Marie was about to reply, when Madame Armand came up and interrupted her, to conduct her to Madame d'Harville. La Louve remained overwhelmed with surprise, and the inspectress said to her:

"I see, with pleasure, that the presence of La Goualeuse in the prison has brought good fortune to you and your companions. I know you have made a subscription for poor Mont Saint-Jean; that is kind and charitable, La Louve, and will be of service to you. I was sure that you were better than you allowed yourself to appear. In recompense for this kind action, I think I can promise you that the term of your imprisonment shall be shortened by several days."

Madame Armand then walked away, followed by Fleur-de-Marie.

We must not be astonished at the almost eloquent language of Fleur-de-Marie, when we remember that her mind, so wonderfully gifted, had rapidly developed itself, thanks to the education and instruction she had received at Bouqueval farm.

The young girl was, indeed, strong in her experience.

The sentiments she had awakened in the heart of La Louve had been awakened in her own heart by Rodolph, and under almost similar circumstances.

Believing that she detected some good instincts in her companion, she had endeavoured to lure her back to honesty, by proving to her (according to Rodolph's

theory, applied to the farm at Bouqueval) that it was her interest to become honest, by pointing out to her restitution to the paths of rectitude in smiling and attractive colours.

And here let us repeat that, in our opinion, an incomplete as well as stupid and inefficacious mode is employed to inspire the poor and ignorant classes with a hatred of evil and a love of good.

In order to turn them away from the bad path, they are incessantly threatened with divine and human vengeance; incessantly a sinister clank is sounded in their ears: prison-keep, fetters, handcuffs; and, in the distance, in dark shadow, at the extreme horizon of crime, they have their attention directed to the executioner's axe glittering amidst the glare of everlasting flames. We observe that the intimidation is constant, fearful, and appalling. To him who does ill, imprisonment, infamy, punishment. This is just. But to him who does well does society award noble gifts, glorious distinctions? No.

Does society encourage resignation, order, probity, in that immense mass of artisans who are for ever doomed to toil and privation, and almost always to profound misery, by benevolent rewards? No.

Is the scaffold which the criminal ascends a protection for the man of integrity? No.

Strange and fatal symbol! Justice is represented as blind, bearing in one hand a sword to punish, and in the other scales in which she weighs accusation and defence. This is not the image of Justice. This is the image of Law, or, rather, of the man who condemns or acquits according to his conscience. Justice should hold in one hand a sword, and in the other a crown, — one to strike the wicked, and the other to recompense the good. The people would then see that, if there is a terrible punishment for evil, there is a brilliant recompense for good; whilst as it is, in their plain and simple sense, the peo-

ple seek in vain for the contrary side of tribunals, gaols, galleys, and scaffolds. The people see plainly a criminal justice, consisting of upright, inflexible, enlightened men, always employed in searching out, detecting, and punishing the evil-doers. They do not see the virtuous justice, consisting of upright, inflexible, and enlightened men, always searching out and rewarding the honest man. All says to him, Tremble! Nothing says to him, Hope! All threatens him; nothing consoles him!

The state annually expends many millions for the sterile punishment of crimes. With this enormous sum it keeps prisoners and gaolers, galley-slaves and galley-sergeants, scaffolds and executioners. This is necessary? Agreed. But how much does the state disburse for the rewards (so salutary, so fruitful) for honest men? Nothing. And this is not all, as we shall demonstrate when the course of this recital shall conduct us to the state prison; how many artisans of irreproachable honesty would attain the summit of their wishes if they were assured of enjoying one day the bodily comforts of prisoners, always certain of good food, good bed, and good shelter? And yet, in the name of their dignity, as honest men, long and painfully tried, have they not a right to claim the same care and comforts as criminals, — such, for instance, as Morel, the lapidary, who had toiled for twenty years, industrious, honest, and resigned, in the midst of bitter misery and sore temptations? Do not such men deserve sufficiently well of society, that society should try and find them out, and if not recompense them, for the honour of humanity, at least support them in the painful and difficult path which they tread so courageously? Is the man of worth so modest that he finds greater security than the thief or assassin? and are not these always detected by criminal justice? Alas, it is a utopia, but it is consoling!

Suppose, for the moment, a society were so organised that it would hold an assizes of virtue, as we have

assizes of crime, — a public ministry pointing out noble actions, disclosing them to the view of all, as we now denounce crimes to the avenging power of the laws. We will give two instances — two justices — and let our readers say which is most fruitful in instruction, in consequences, in positive results. One man has killed another, for the purpose of robbing him; at break of day they stealthily erect the guillotine in an obscure corner of Paris and cut off the assassin's head before the dregs of the populace, which laughs at the judge, the sufferer, and the executioner. This is the last resort of society. This is the chastisement she bestows on the greatest crime which can be committed against her. This is the most terrible, the most wholesome warning she can give to her population, — the only one, for there is no counterpoise to this keen axe, dripping with blood; no, society has no spectacle, mild and benevolent, to oppose to this funereal scene.

Let us go on with our utopia. Would it not be otherwise if almost every day the people had before their eyes some illustrious virtues greatly glorified and substantially rewarded by the state? Would it not be to encourage good continually, if we often saw an august, imposing, and venerable tribunal summon before it, in presence of an immense multitude, a poor and honest artisan, whose long, intelligent, and enduring life should be described, whilst he was thus addressed:

"For twenty years you have manfully struggled against misfortune, your family has been brought up by you in the principles of honour and rectitude, your superior virtues have greatly distinguished you, — you merit praise and recompense. Society, always vigilant, just, and all-powerful, never leaves in oblivion either good or evil. Every man is recompensed according to his works. The state assures to you a pension sufficient for your wants. Obtaining this deserved mark of public notice, you will end in leisure and ease a life which is

an example to all; and thus are and will be exalted those who, like yourself, shall have struggled for many years with an admirable persistence in good, and given proof of rare and grand moral qualities. Your example will encourage a great many to imitate you; hope will lighten the painful burden which their destiny imposes on them for so many years of their life. Animated by a salutary emulation, they will energetically struggle to accomplish the most arduous duties, in order that one day they may be distinguished from the rest, and rewarded as you are."

We ask, which of the two sights — the beheaded assassin, or the good man rewarded — would act on the million with more salutary and more fruitful effect?

No doubt many delicate minds will be indignant at the bare thought of these ignoble substantial rewards awarded to the most ethereal thing in the world, — Virtue! They will find all sorts of arguments, more or less philosophical, platonic, theological, and especially economic, against such a proposition; such as, "Virtue is its own reward;" "Virtue is a priceless gem;" "The satisfaction of the conscience is the noblest of recompenses;" and, finally, this triumphant and unanswerable objection, "The eternal happiness which awaits the just in another life ought to be sufficient to encourage mankind to do well." To this we reply that society, in order to intimidate and punish the guilty, does not appear to us to rely entirely and exclusively on the divine vengeance, which they tell us will visit them in another world. Society anticipates the last judgment by human judgments. Awaiting the inexorable hour of the archangels in armour, with sounding trumpets and fiery swords, society modestly comforts herself with — *gens-d'armes*.

We repeat, to terrify the wicked, we materialise, or rather we reduce to human, perceptible, and visible proportions, the anticipated effects of divine wrath.

Why should we not do the same with the divine rewards to worthy and virtuous people?

But let us leave these mad, absurd, stupid, impracticable utopianisms, like real utopianisms, as they are. Society is as well as it is. Ask those merry souls, who, with uncertain step, stupid look, and noisy laugh, have just quitted the gay banquet, if it is not.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PROTECTRESS.

The inspectress soon entered with Goualeuse into the little room where Clémence was staying. The pale cheek of the young girl was still slightly coloured in consequence of her conversation with La Louve.

"Madame la Marquise, pleased with the excellent character I have given of you," said Madame Armand to Fleur-de-Marie, "has desired to see you, and will, perhaps, be so good as to have you released from here before the expiration of your time."

"I thank you, madame," replied Fleur-de-Marie, timidly, to Madame Armand, who left her alone with the marchioness.

The latter, struck by the candid expression of her protégée's features, and by her carriage, so full of grace and modesty, could not help remembering that La Goualeuse had pronounced the name of Rodolph in her sleep, and that the inspectress believed the youthful prisoner to be a prey to deep and hidden love. Although perfectly convinced that it could not be a question as to the Grand Duke Rodolph, Clémence acknowledged to herself that, with regard to beauty, La Goualeuse was worthy of a prince's love.

At the sight of her protectress, whose physiognomy, as we have said, displayed excessive goodness, Fleur-de-Marie felt herself sympathetically attracted towards her.

"My girl," said Clémence to her, "whilst commend-

ing the gentleness of your disposition and the discreetness of your behaviour, Madame Armand complains of your want of confidence in her."

Fleur-de-Marie bowed her look, but did not reply.

"The peasant's dress in which you were clad when you were apprehended, your silence on the subject of the place where you resided before you were brought here, prove that you conceal certain particulars from us."

"Madame — "

"I have no right to your confidence, my poor child, nor would I ask you any question that would distress you; but, as I am assured that if I request your discharge from prison it will be accorded to me, before I do so I should wish to talk to you of your own plans, your resources for the future. Once free, what do you propose to do? If, as I doubt not, you decide on following the good path you have already entered upon, have confidence in me, and I will put you in the way of gaining an honest subsistence."

La Goualeuse was moved to tears at the interest which Madame d'Harville evinced for her. After a moment's hesitation, she replied:

"You are very good, madame, to show so much benevolence towards me, — so generous, that I ought, perhaps, to break the silence which I have hitherto kept on the past, to which I was forced by an oath — "

"An oath?"

"Yes, madame, I have sworn to be secret to justice, and the persons employed in this prison, as to the series of events by which I was brought hither. Yet, madame, if you will make me a promise — "

"Of what nature?"

"To keep my secret. I may, thanks to you, madame, without breaking my oath, comfort most worthy persons who, no doubt, are excessively uneasy on my account."

"Rely on my discretion. I will only say what you authorise me to disclose."

"Oh, thanks, madame! I was so fearful that my silence towards my benefactors would appear like ingratitude!"

The gentle accents of Fleur-de-Marie, and her well-selected phrases, struck Madame d'Harville with fresh surprise.

"I will not conceal from you," said she, "that your demeanour, your language, all surprise me in a remarkable degree. How could you, with an education which appears polished, — how could you —"

"Fall so low, you would say, madame?" said Goualeuse, with bitterness. "Alas! It is but a very short time that I have received this education. I owe this benefit to a generous protector, who, like you, madame, without knowing me, without even having the favourable recommendation which you have received in my favour, took pity upon me —"

"And who is this protector?"

"I do not know, madame."

"You do not know?"

"He only makes himself known, they tell me, by his inexhaustible goodness. Thanks be to Heaven, he found me in his path!"

"And when did you first meet?"

"One night, — in the Cité, madame," said Goualeuse, lowering her eyes, "a man was going to beat me; this unknown benefactor defended me courageously; this was my first meeting with him."

"Then he was one of the people?"

"The first time I saw him he had the dress and language; but afterwards —"

"Afterwards?"

"The way in which he spoke to me, the profound respect with which he was treated by the persons to whom he confided me, all proved to me that he had only assumed the exterior disguise of one of the men who are seen about the Cité."

"But with what motive?"

"I do not know."

"And do you know the name of this mysterious protector?"

"Oh, yes, madame," said La Goualeuse, with excitement; "thank Heaven! For I can incessantly bless and adore that name. My preserver is called M. Rodolph, madame."

Clémence blushed deeply.

"And has he no other name," she asked, quickly, of Fleur-de-Marie.

"I know no other, madame. In the farm, where he sent me, he was only known as M. Rodolph."

"And his age?"

"Still young, madame."

"And handsome?"

"Oh, yes! Handsome, — noble as his own heart."

The grateful and impassioned accent with which Fleur-de-Marie uttered these words caused a deeply painful sensation in Madame d'Harville's bosom. An unconquerable and inexplicable presentiment told her that it was indeed the prince. "The remarks of the inspectress were just," thought Clémence. "Goualeuse loves Rodolph; that was the name which she pronounced in her sleep. Under what strange circumstance had the prince and this unfortunate girl met? Why did Rodolph go disguised into the Cité?"

The marquise could not resolve these questions. She only remembered what Sarah had wickedly and mendaciously told her as to the pretended eccentricities of Rodolph. Was it not, in fact, strange that he should have extricated from the dregs of society a girl of such excessive loveliness, and evidently so intelligent and sensible?

Clémence had noble qualities, but she was a woman, and deeply loved Rodolph, although she had resolved to bury that secret in her heart's very core.

Without reflecting that this was unquestionably but one of those generous actions which the prince was accustomed to do by stealth, without considering that she was, perchance, confounding with love a sentiment that was but excess of gratitude, without considering that, even if this feeling were more tender, Rodolph must be ignorant of it, the marchioness, in the first moment of bitterness and injustice, could not help looking on Goualeuse as her rival. Her pride revolted when she believed she was suffering, in spite of herself, with such a humiliating rivalry; and she replied, in a tone so harsh as to contrast cruelly with the affectionate kindness of her first words:

"And how is it, then, mademoiselle, that your protector leaves you in prison? How comes it that you are here?"

"Oh, madame," said Fleur-de-Marie, struck at this sudden change of tone, "have I done anything to displease you?"

"In what could you have displeased me?" asked Madame d'Harville, haughtily.

"It appeared to me just now that you spoke to me so kindly, madame."

"Really, mademoiselle, is it necessary that I should weigh every word I utter? Since I take an interest in you, I have, I think, a right to ask you certain questions!"

Scarcely had Clémence uttered these words, than she regretted their severity; first from a praiseworthy return of generosity, and then because she thought by being harsh with her rival she might not learn any more of what she was so anxious to know. In fact, Goualeuse's countenance, just now so open and confiding, became suddenly alarmed. Like the sensitive plant, which, on the first touch, curls up its leaves and withdraws within itself, the heart of Fleur-de-Marie became painfully contracted. Clémence replied, gently, in order that she

might not awaken her protégée's suspicions by too sudden a return to a milder tone:

"Really I must repeat that I cannot understand why, having so much to praise your benefactor for, you are left here a prisoner. How is it that, after having returned with all sincerity to the paths of rectitude, you could have been apprehended, at night, in a forbidden place? All this, I confess to you, appears to me very extraordinary. You speak of an oath, which has bound you to silence; but this very oath is so strange!"

"I have spoken the truth, madame — "

"I am sure of that; it is only to see and hear you to be convinced that you are incapable of falsehood; but what is so incomprehensible in your situation makes me the more curious and impatient to have it cleared up; and to this alone must you attribute the abruptness of my language just now. I was wrong, I feel I was, for, although I have no claim to your confidence beyond my anxious desire to be of service to you, yet you have offered to disclose to me what you have not yet told to any person; and I can assure you, my poor girl, that this proof of your confidence in the interest I feel for you touches me very nearly. I promise you to keep your secret most scrupulously, if you confide it to me, and I will do everything in my power to effect what you may wish to have done."

Thanks to this skilful patching up (the phrase will be excused, we trust), Madame d'Harville regained La Goualeuse's confidence, which had been for a moment repressed. Fleur-de-Marie, in her candour, reproached herself for having wrongly interpreted the words which had wounded her.

"Excuse me, madame," she said to Clémence; "I was, no doubt, wrong not to tell you at once what you desired to know, but you asked me for the name of my preserver, and, in spite of myself, I could not resist the pleasure of speaking of him."

"Nothing could be more praiseworthy, and it proves how truly grateful you are to him. Tell me how it was that you left the worthy people with whom you were, no doubt, placed by M. Rodolph? Is it to this event that the oath you were compelled to take, refers?"

"Yes, madame; but, thanks to you, I think I may still keep my word faithfully, and, at the same time, inform my benefactors as to my disappearance."

"Now, then, my poor girl, I am all attention to you."

"It is three months nearly since M. Rodolph placed me at a farm, which is situated four or five leagues from Paris — "

"Did M. Rodolph take you there himself?"

"Yes, madame, and confided me to the charge of a worthy lady, as good as she was venerable; and I loved her like my mother. She and the curé of the village, at the request of M. Rodolph, took charge of my education."

"And M. — Rodolph, — did he often come to the farm?"

"No, madame, he only came three times during the whole time I was there."

Clémence's heart throbbed with joy.

"And when he came to see you that made you very happy, did it not?"

"Oh, yes, madame! It was more than happiness to me; it was a feeling mingled with gratitude, respect, adoration, and even a degree of fear."

"Of fear?"

"Between him and me, between him and others, the distance is so great!"

"But what, then, was his rank?"

"I do not know that he had any rank, madame."

"Yet you allude to the distance which exists between him and others."

"Oh, madame, what places him above all the rest of the world is the elevation of his character, his inexhaustible generosity towards those who suffer, the enthusiasm

which he inspires in every one. The wicked, even, cannot hear his name without trembling, and respect as much as they dread him! But forgive me, madame, for still speaking of him. I ought to be silent, for I seek to give you an adequate idea of him who ought to be adored in silence. I might as well try to express by words the goodness of Heaven!"

"This comparison — "

"Is, perhaps, sacrilegious, madame; but will it offend the good God to compare to him one who has given me the consciousness of good and evil, one who has snatched me from the abyss, one, in fact, to whom I owe a new existence?"

"I do not blame you, my child; I can understand all your noble exaggerations. But how was it that you abandoned this farm, where you must have been so happy?"

"Alas, not voluntarily, madame!"

"Who, then, forced you away?"

"One evening, some days since," said Fleur-de-Marie, trembling even as she spoke, "I was going towards the parsonage-house in the village, when a wicked woman, who had used me very cruelly during my infancy, and a man, her accomplice, who had concealed themselves in a ravine, threw themselves upon me, and, after having gagged me, carried me off in a hackney-coach."

"For what purpose?"

"I know not, madame. My ravishers, as I think, were acting in conformity to orders from some powerful personages."

"What followed this?"

"Scarcely was the hackney-coach in motion, than the wicked creature, who is called La Chouette, exclaimed, 'I have some vitriol here, and I'll rub La Goualeuse's face, to disfigure her with it!'"

"Oh, horrible! Unhappy girl! And who has saved you from this danger?"

"The woman's confederate, a blind man called the Schoolmaster."

"And he defended you?"

"Yes, madame, this and another time also. On this occasion there was a struggle between him and La Chouette: exerting his strength, the Schoolmaster compelled her to throw out of window the bottle which held the vitriol. This was the first service he rendered me, after having, however, aided in carrying me off. The night was excessively dark. At the end of an hour and a half the coach stopped, as I think, on the highroad which traverses the Plain St. Denis, and here was a man on horseback, evidently awaiting us. 'What!' said he, 'have you got her at last?' 'Yes, we've got her,' answered La Chouette, who was furious because she had been hindered from disfiguring me. 'If you wish to get rid of the little baggage at once, it will be a good plan to stretch her on the ground, and let the coach wheels pass over her skull. It will appear as if she had been accidentally killed.'"

"You make me shudder."

"Alas, madame, La Chouette was quite capable of doing what she said! Fortunately, the man on horseback replied that he would not have any harm done to me, and all he wanted was to have me confined somewhere for two months in a place whence I could neither go out nor be allowed to write to any one. Then La Chouette proposed to take me to a man's called Bras Rouge, who keeps a tavern in the Champs Elysées. In this tavern there are several subterranean chambers, and one of these, La Chouette said, would serve me for a prison. The man on horseback agreed to this proposition; and he promised me that, after remaining two months at Bras Rouge's, I should be properly taken care of, and not be sorry for having quitted the farm at Bouqueval."

"What a strange mystery!"

"This man gave money to La Chouette, and promised her more when she should bring me from Bras Rouge's, and then galloped away. Our hackney-coach continued its way on to Paris; and a short time before we reached the barrier the Schoolmaster said to La Chouette, 'You want to shut Goualeuse up in one of Bras Rouge's cellars, when you know very well that, being so close to the river's side, these cellars are always under water in the winter! Do you wish to drown her?' 'Yes,' replied La Chouette."

"Poor girl! What had you ever done to this horrid woman?"

"Nothing, madame; and from my very infancy she had always been so full of hatred towards me. The Schoolmaster replied, 'I won't have Goualeuse drowned! She sha'n't go to Bras Rouge's!' La Chouette was as astonished as I was, madame, to hear this man defend me thus, and she flew into a violent rage, and swore she would take me to Bras Rouge's in spite of the Schoolmaster. 'I defy you!' said he, 'for I have got Goualeuse by the arm, and I will not let go my hold of her; and, if you come near her, I'll strangle you!' 'What do you mean, then, to do with her,' cried La Chouette, 'since she must be concealed somewhere for two months, so that no one may know where she is?' 'There's a way,' said the Schoolmaster. 'We are going by the Champs Elysées; we will stop the coach a little way off the guard-house, and you shall go to Bras Rouge's tavern. It is midnight, and you will be sure to find him; bring him here, and he shall lead La Goualeuse to the guard-house, declaring that she is a *fille de la Cité*, whom he has found loitering about his house. As girls are sentenced to three months' imprisonment if found in the Champs Elysées, and as La Goualeuse is still on the police books, she will be apprehended and sent to St. Lazare, where she will be better taken care of and concealed than in Bras Rouge's cellar.' 'But,' answered

La Chouette, 'Goualeuse will not allow herself to be arrested even at the *corps-de-garde*. She will declare that we have carried her off, and give information against us; and, supposing even that she goes to prison, she will write to her protectors, and all will be discovered.' 'No, she will go to prison willingly,' answered the Schoolmaster; 'and she shall take an oath not to give any information against any person as long as she is in St. Lazare, nor afterwards, either. This is a debt she owes me, for I prevented you from disfiguring her, La Chouette, and saved her from being drowned at Bras Rouge's; but if, after having sworn not to speak, she dares to do so, we will attack the farm at Bouqueval with fire and blood!' Then, addressing me, the Schoolmaster added, 'Decide, then: take the oath I demand of you, and you shall get off for three months in prison; if not, I abandon you to La Chouette, who will take you to Bras Rouge's, where you will be drowned, and we will set Bouqueval farm on fire. So, come, decide. I know, if you take the oath, you will keep it.'"

"And you did swear?"

"Alas, yes, madame! I was so fearful they would do my protectors at the farm an injury, and then I so much dreaded being drowned by La Chouette in a cellar, it seemed so frightful to me; another death would have seemed to me less horrid, and, perhaps, I should not have tried to escape it."

"What a dreadful idea at your age!" said Madame d'Harville, looking at La Goualeuse with surprise. "When you have left this place, and have been restored to your benefactors, shall you not be very happy? Has not your repentance effaced the past?"

"Can the past ever be effaced? Can the past ever be forgotten? Can repentance kill memory, madame?" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, in a tone so despairing that Clémence shuddered.

"But all faults are retrieved, unhappy girl!"

"And the remembrance of stain, madame, does not that become more and more terrible in proportion as the soul becomes purer, in proportion as the mind becomes more elevated? Alas, the higher we ascend, the deeper appears the abyss which we have quitted!"

"Then you renounce all hope of restoration — of pardon?"

"On the part of others — no, madame, your kindness proves to me that remorse will find indulgence."

"But you will be pitiless towards yourself?"

"Others, madame, may not know, pardon, or forget what I have been, but I shall never forget it!"

"And do you sometimes desire to die?"

"Sometimes!" said Goualeuse, smiling bitterly. Then, after a moment's silence, she added, "Sometimes, — yes, madame."

"Still you were afraid of being disfigured by that horrid woman; and so you wish to preserve your beauty, my poor little girl. That proves that life has still some attraction for you; so courage! Courage!"

"It is, perhaps, weakness to think of it, but if I were handsome, as you say, madame, I should like to die handsome, pronouncing the name of my benefactor."

Madame d'Harville's eyes filled with tears. Fleur-de-Marie had said these last words with so much simplicity; her angelic, pale, depressed features, her melancholy smile, were all so much in accord with her words, that it was impossible to doubt the reality of her sad desire. Madame d'Harville was endued with too much delicacy not to feel how miserable, how fatal, was this thought of La Goualeuse: "I shall never forget what I have been!" — the fixed, permanent, incessant idea which controlled and tortured Fleur-de-Marie's life. Clémence, ashamed at having for an instant misconstrued the ever disinterested generosity of the prince, regretted also that she had for a moment allowed herself to be actuated by any

feeling of absurd jealousy against La Goualeuse, who, with such pure excitement, expressed her gratitude towards her protector. It was strange that the admiration which this poor prisoner felt so deeply towards Rodolph perhaps increased the profound love which Clémence must for ever conceal from him. She said, to drive away these thoughts:

"I trust that, for the future, you will be less severe towards yourself. But let us talk of this oath, for now I can explain your silence. You will not denounce these wretches?"

"Although the Schoolmaster shared in my carrying off, yet he twice defended me, and I would not be ungrateful towards him."

"Then you lent yourself to the plans of these monsters?"

"Yes, madame, I was so frightened! The Chouette went to seek for Bras Rouge, who conducted me to the guard-house, saying he had found me roving near his cabaret. I did not deny it, and so they took me into custody and brought me here."

"But your friends at the farm must be in the utmost anxiety about you!"

"Alas, madame, in my great alarm, I did not reflect that my oath would prevent me from assuring them of my safety. Now that makes me wretched! But I think (and hope you think so, too) that, without breaking my word, I may beg of you to write to Madame Georges at the farm of Bouqueval, and assure her that she need have no fears for me, without informing her where I am; for I have promised to be silent."

"My child, these precautions will be useless if, at my recommendation, you are pardoned. To-morrow you will return to the farm without having betrayed your oath by that; and you may consult your friends hereafter to know how far you are bound by a promise which was extorted from you by a threat."

"You believe then, madame, that, thanks to your kindness, I may hope to leave here very soon?"

"You deserve my interest so much that I am sure I shall succeed, and I have no doubt but that the day after to-morrow you may rely on going in person to your benefactors."

"So soon! Madame, how have I deserved so much goodness on your part? How can I ever repay your kindness?"

"By continuing to behave as you have done. I only regret that I cannot do anything towards your future existence; that is a pleasure which your friends have reserved for themselves."

At this moment Madame Armand entered abruptly, and with a troubled air.

"Madame la Marquise," she said, addressing Clémence with hesitation, "I am deeply pained with a message I have to convey to you."

"What do you mean, madame?"

"The Duke de Lucenay is below, just come from your house, madame."

"La, how you frighten me! What's the matter?"

"I do not know, madame; but M. de Lucenay has, he told me, some very distressing information to communicate to you. He learnt from the duchess, his lady, that you were here, and has come in great haste."

"Distressing information!" said Madame d'Harville to herself; then she suddenly shrieked out, in agonised accents, "My daughter, my daughter, my daughter, perhaps! Oh, speak, madame!"

"I do not know, your ladyship."

"Oh, for mercy's sake — for mercy's sake, take me to M. de Lucenay!" cried Madame d'Harville, rushing out with a bewildered air, followed by Madame Armand.

"Poor mother! She fears for her child!" said La

Goualeuse, following Clémence with her eyes. "Oh, no, it is impossible! At the very moment when she was so benevolent and kind to me such a blow could not strike her! No, no; once again I say it is impossible!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FORCED FRIENDSHIP.

We shall now conduct the reader to the house in the Rue du Temple, about three o'clock on the day in which M. d'Harville terminated his existence. At the time mentioned, the conscientious and indefatigable M. Pipelet sat alone in his lodge, occupied in repairing the boot which had, more than once, fallen from his hand during Cabrion's last attack: the physiognomy of the delicate-minded porter was dejected, and exhibited a more than usually melancholy air.

All at once a loud and shrill voice was heard calling from the upper part of the house, exclaiming, in tones which reëchoed down the staircase:

"M. Pipelet! M. Pipelet! Make haste! Come up as fast as you can! Madame Pipelet is taken very ill!"

"God bless me!" cried Alfred, rising from his stool. "Anastasie ill!" But, quickly resuming his seat, he said to himself, "What a simpleton I must be to believe such a thing! My wife has been gone out more than an hour! Ah, but may she not have returned without my observing it? Certainly, such a mode of proceeding would be somewhat irregular, but I am not the less bound to admit that it is possible."

"M. Pipelet!" called out the up-stairs voice again. "Pray come as quickly as you can: I am holding your wife in my arms!"

"Holloa!" said Pipelet, springing up abruptly. "Somebody got my wife in his arms!"

"I really cannot manage to unlace Madame Pipelet's stays by myself!" screamed out the voice, in tones louder than before.

These words perfectly electrified Alfred, and the blush of offended modesty empurpled his melancholy features.

"Sir-r-r!" cried he in a stentorian voice, as he rushed frantically from his lodge. "Sir-r-r! I adjure you, in the name of Honour, to leave my wife and her stays alone! I come! I come!"

And so saying, Alfred dashed into the dark labyrinth called a staircase, forgetting, in his excitement, to close the door of the lodge after him.

Scarcely had he quitted it than an individual entered quickly, snatched from the table the cobbler's hammer, sprung on the bed, and, by means of four small tacks, previously inserted into each corner of a thick cardboard he carried with him, nailed the cardboard to the back of the dark recess in which stood Pipelet's bed; then disappeared as quickly as he had come. So expeditiously was the operation performed, that the porter, having almost immediately recollected his omission respecting the closing the lodge door, hastily descended, and both shut and locked it; then putting the key in his pocket, returned with all speed to succour his wife above-stairs, without the slightest suspicion crossing his mind that any foot had trod there since his own. Having taken this precautionary measure, Alfred again darted off to the assistance of Anastasie, exclaiming, with all the power of his lungs:

"Sir-r-r! I come! Behold me! I place my wife beneath the safeguard of your delicacy!"

But a fresh surprise awaited the worthy porter, and had well-nigh caused him to fall from the height he had ascended to the sill of his own lodge, — the voice of her he expected to find fainting in the arms of some unknown individual was now heard, not from the upper

part of the house, but at the entrance! In well-known accents, but sharper and shriller than usual, he heard Anastasie exclaim:

"Why, Alfred! What do you mean by leaving the lodge? Where have you got to, you old gossip?"

At this appeal, M. Pipelet managed to descend as far as the first landing, where he remained petrified with astonishment, gazing downwards with fixed stare, open mouth, and one foot drawn up in the most ludicrous manner.

"Alfred, I say!" screamed Madame Pipelet, a second time, in a voice loud enough to awake the dead.

"Anastasie down there? Then it is impossible she can be ill up-stairs," said Pipelet, mentally, faithful to his system of close and logical argumentation. "Whose, then, was the manly voice that spoke of her illness, and of his undoing her stays? An impostor, doubtless, to whom my distraction and alarm have been a matter of amusement; but what motive could he have had in thus working upon my susceptible feelings? Something very extraordinary is going on here. However, as soon as I have been to answer my wife's inquiry, I will return to clear up this mystery, and to discover the person whose voice summoned me in such haste."

In considerable agitation did M. Pipelet descend, and find himself in his wife's presence.

"It is you, then, this time?" inquired he.

"Of course it is me; who did you expect it was?"

"'Tis you, indeed! My senses do not deceive me!"

"Alfred, what is the matter with you? Why do you stand there, staring and opening your mouth, as if you meant to swallow me?"

"Because your presence reveals to me that strange things are passing here, so strange that —"

"Oh, stuff and nonsense! Give me the key of the lodge! What made you leave it when I was out? I have just come from the office where the diligence

starts from for Normandy. I went there in a coach to take M. Bradamanti's trunk, as he did not wish that little rascal, Tortillard, to know anything about it, since, it seems, he had rather no one should be acquainted with the fact of his leaving Paris this evening; and, as for his mistrusting the boy, why, I don't wonder at it."

Saying these words, Madame Pipelet took the key from her husband's hand, opened the lodge, and entered it before her partner; but scarcely were they both safe within its dark recesses, than an individual, lightly descending the staircase, passed swiftly and unobserved before the lodge. This personage was Cabrion, who, having managed to steal up-stairs, had so powerfully worked upon the porter's tender susceptibilities. M. Pipelet threw himself into his chair, saying to his wife, in a voice of deep emotion:

"Anastasie, I do not feel myself comfortable to-day; strange and mysterious things are going on in this house."

"What! Are you going to break out again? What an old fool you are! Why, strange things happen in every house. What has come over you? Come, let's look at you! Well, I declare, you are all of a sweat, just as if you had been dragged out of the water! What have you been doing since I left you? Overexerting yourself, I am sure, and I forbid you ever doing so. La! Look how the great drops pour from him, poor old chick!"

"And well they may!" exclaimed M. Pipelet, passing his hand over his face, bathed in its own dew; "well may I sweat, — ay, even blood and water, — for there are facts connected with this house past belief or comprehension. First, you summon me up-stairs, and, at the same moment, I find you waiting below! Oh, it is too, too much for my poor brain!"

"Deuce take me, if I can comprehend one word of all

you are saying! Lord, help us! It is to be hoped your poor old brain is not cracked. I tell you what, if you go on so, I shall just set you down for cracked; and all through that scamp of a Cabrion, — the devil take him! Ever since that last trick he played the other day, I declare you have not been yourself, so flustered and bewildered! Do you mean to live in fear and dread of that abominable painter all your days?"

But scarcely had Anastasie uttered these words than a fearful thing occurred. Alfred continued sitting, with his face turned towards the bed, while the lodge was dimly illumined by the faint glimmer of a winter's afternoon and a lamp that stood burning on the table, near Alfred's work. By these doubtful lights, M. Pipelet, just as his wife pronounced the name of Cabrion, imagined he saw, in the shadow of the recess, the half stolid, half chuckling features of his enemy. Alas! Too truly, there he was. His steeple-crowned hat, his flowing locks, thin countenance, sardonic smile, pointed beard, and look of fiendish malice, all were there, past all mistake. For a moment, M. Pipelet believed himself under the influence of a dream, and passed his hand across his eyes, in hopes that the illusion might disperse; but no; there was nothing illusive in what his eyes glared so fearfully upon, — nothing could be more real or positive. Yet, horror of horrors! This object seemed merely to possess a head, which, without allowing any part of the body to appear, grinned a satanic smile from the dark draperies of the recess in which stood the bed. At this horrific vision M. Pipelet fell back, without uttering a word. With uplifted arm he pointed towards the source of his terrors, but with so strong a manifestation of intense alarm that Madame Pipelet, spite of her usual courage and self-possession, could not help feeling a dread of — she knew not what. She staggered back a few steps, then, seizing Alfred by the hand, exclaimed:

"Cabrion!"

"I know it!" groaned forth M. Pipelet, in a deep, hollow voice, shutting his eyes to exclude the frightful spectre.

Nothing could have borne more flattering tribute to the talent which had so admirably delineated the features of Cabrion than the overwhelming terror his pasteboard likeness occasioned to the worthy couple in the lodge; but the first surprise of Anastasie over, she, bold as a lioness, rushed to the bed, sprang upon it, and, though not without some trepidation, tore the painting from the wall, against which it had been nailed; then, crowning her valiant deed by her accustomed favourite expression, the amazon triumphantly exclaimed:

"Get along with you!"

Alfred, on the contrary, remained with closed eyes and extended hands, fixed and motionless, according to his wont during the most critical passages of his life; the continued oscillation of his bell-crowned hat alone revealing, from time to time, the violence of his internal emotions.

"Open your eyes, my old duck!" cried Madame Pipelet, triumphantly. "It is nothing to be afraid of, only a picture, a portrait of that scoundrel Cabrion. Look here, lovey, — look at 'Stasie stamping on it!" continued the indignant wife, throwing the painting on the ground, and jumping upon it with all her force; then added, "Ah, I wish I had the villain here, to serve the same! I'll warrant I'd mark him for life!" Then, picking up the portrait, she said, "Well, I've served you out, anyhow! Just look, old dear, if I haven't!"

But poor Alfred, with a disconsolate shake of the head, made signs that he had rather not, and further intimating, by expressive gestures, his earnest desire that his wife would remove the detested likeness of his bitter foe far from his view.

"Well," cried the porteress, examining the portrait by the aid of the lamp, "was there ever such imperance? Why, Alfred, the vile feller has presumed to write in red letters at the bottom of the picture, 'To my dear friend Pipelet; presented by his friend for life, Cabrion!'"

"For life!" groaned Pipelet; then, heaving a deep sigh, he added, "Yes, 'tis my life he aims at; and he will finish by taking it. I shall exist, from this day forward, in a state of continual alarm, believing that the fiend who torments me is ever near, — hid, perhaps, in the floor, the wall, the ceiling, and thence watches me throughout the day; or even at night, when sleeping in the chaste arms of my wife, his eye is still on me. And who can tell but he is at this very instant behind me, gazing with that well-known sardonic grin; or crouched down in some corner of the room, like a deadly reptile! Say, you monster, are you there? Are you there, I demand?" cried M. Pipelet, accompanying this furious adjuration by a sort of circular motion of the head, as though wishing to interrogate every nook and corner of the lodge.

"Yes, dear friend, here I am!" answered the well-known voice of Cabrion, in blandly affectionate tones.

By a simple trick in ventriloquism, these words were made to appear as though issuing from the recess in which stood the bed; but the malicious joker was in reality close to the door of the lodge, enjoying every particular look and word that passed within. However, after uttering the last few words, he prudently disappeared with all haste, though not (as will be seen) without leaving his victim a fresh subject for rage, astonishment, and meditation.

Madame Pipelet, still skeptical and courageous, carefully examined under the bed, as well as in every corner of the lodge, but, discovering no trace of the enemy, actually went out into the alley to prosecute her researches; while M. Pipelet, completely crushed by this

last blow, fell back into his chair in a state of boundless despair.

"Never mind, Alfred!" said Anastasie, who always exhibited great determination upon all critical occasions. "Bless you! The villain had managed to hide himself somewhere near the door, and, while we were looking in one direction, he managed to slip out in another. But just wait a bit: I shall catch him one of these days, and then see if I don't make him taste my broomstick! Let him take care, that's all!"

The door opened as she concluded this animating address, and Madame Séraphin, the housekeeper of the notary, Jacques Ferrand, entered the lodge.

"Good day, Madame Séraphin," said Madame Pipelet, who, in her extreme anxiety to conceal her domestic troubles from a stranger, assumed all at once a most gracious and winning manner; "what can I have the pleasure of doing for you?"

"Why, first of all, tell me what is the meaning of your new sign?"

"Our new sign?"

"Yes; the small printed board."

"Printed board!"

"To be sure; that black board with red letters, hung over the door leading from the alley up to your lodge."

"What, out in the street?"

"In the street, I tell you, precisely over your door."

"I wish I may die if I understand a single word of what you are talking about! Do you, old dear?"

Alfred spoke not.

"Certainly," continued Madame Séraphin, "since it relates to M. Pipelet, he can best explain to me what this board means."

Alfred uttered a sort of heavy, inarticulate groan, while his bell-crowned hat recommenced its convulsive agitations. This pantomimic action was meant

to express that Alfred was in no condition to explain anything to anybody, having his mind already sufficiently burdened with an infinity of problematical questions he sought in vain to solve.

"Don't take any notice of poor dear Alfred, Madame Séraphin; he has got the cramp in his stomach, and that makes him so very — But what is this board of which you were speaking? Very likely it has just been put up by the man who keeps the wine-shop at the corner."

"I tell you again it is no such thing. It is a small painted board, hung up over your door, — I mean the door leading from the alley to the street."

"Ah, you are laughing at us!"

"Indeed I am not. I saw it just now, as I came in; on it is written, in large letters, 'Pipelet and Cabrion, dealers in Friendship and similar Articles. Inquire of the Porter.'"

"Gracious goodness! Do you hear that, Alfred? Do you hear what is written up over our door?"

Alfred gazed at Madame Séraphin with a bewildered look, but he neither understood nor sought to understand her meaning.

"Do you mean to say," continued Madame Pipelet, confounded by this fresh audacity, "that you positively saw a little board out in the street with all that about Alfred and Cabrion, and dealing in friendship?"

"I tell you I have just seen it, and read with my own eyes what I described to you. 'Well,' said I to myself, 'this is droll enough! M. Pipelet is a shoemaker by trade, but here he writes up publicly that he is a dealer in friendship along with a M. Cabrion! What can all this mean? There is something meant more than meets the eye!' Still, as the board further directed all persons desirous of knowing more to apply to the porter, 'Oh,' thinks I, 'Madame Pipelet can explain all this to me!' But, look, look!" cried Madame Séraphin, suddenly

breaking off in her remarks. "Your husband is taken ill! Mind what you are about, or he will fall backwards!"

Madame Pipelet flew to her afflicted partner, and was just in time to receive him, half fainting, in her arms. The last blow had been too overwhelming, — the man in the bell-crowned hat had but just strength left to murmur forth, "The scoundrel has, then, publicly placarded me!"

"I told you, Madame Séraphin, that poor Alfred was suffering dreadful with the cramp in his stomach, besides being worried to death by a crack-brained vagabond, who is at him night and day: he'll be the death of my poor old duck at last. Never mind, darling, I've got a nice little drop of aniseed to give you; so drink it, and see if you can't shake your old feathers and be yourself again!"

Thanks to the timely application of Madame Pipelet's infallible remedy, Alfred gradually recovered his senses; but, alas, scarcely was he restored to full consciousness ere he was subjected to another and equally cruel trial of his feelings!

An individual of middle age, respectably dressed, and possessing a countenance so simple, or rather so silly, as to render it impossible to suspect him of any malice prepense or intended irony, opened the upper and glazed part of the lodge door, saying, with the most genuine air of mystification:

"I have just read on a small board placed over the door, at the entrance to the alley, the following words: 'Pipelet and Cabrion, dealers in Friendship and similar Articles. Inquire of the Porter.' Will you oblige me by explaining the meaning of those words, if you are, as I presume you to be, the porter in question?"

"The meaning!" exclaimed M. Pipelet, in a voice of thunder, and giving vent at length to his so long restrained indignation; "the meaning is simply, sir-r-r, that M. Cabrion is an infamous scoundrel, — an impostor!"

The simple-looking interrogator drew back, in dread of the consequences that might follow this sudden and furious burst of wrath, while, wrought up to a state of fury, Alfred leaned over the half door of the lodge, his glaring eyeballs and clenched hands indicating the intensity of his feelings; while the figures of Madame Séraphin and Anastasie were dimly revealed amid the murky shades of the small room.

"Let me tell you, sir-r-r!" cried M. Pipelet, addressing the placid-looking man at the door, "that I have no dealings with that beggar Cabrion, and certainly none in the way of friendship!"

"No, that I'm sure you have not!" screamed out Madame Pipelet, in confirmation of her husband's words; adding, as she displayed her forbidding countenance over her husband's shoulder, "and I wonder very much where that old dunderhead has come from to ask such a stupid question?"

"I beg your pardon, madame," said the guileless-looking individual thus addressed, again withdrawing another step to escape the concentrated anger of the enraged pair; "placards are made to be read, — you put out a board, which I read, — now allow me to say that I am not to blame for perusing what you set up purposely to attract attention, but that you are decidedly wrong to insult me so grossly when I civilly come to you, as your own board desires, for information."

"Oh, you old fool! Get along with you!" exclaimed Anastasie, with a most hideous distortion of visage.

"You are a rude, unmannerly woman!"

"Alfred, deary, just fetch me your boot-jack: I'll give that old chatterer such a mark that his own mother shall not know her darling again!"

"Really, madame, I can't say I understand receiving such rough treatment when I come, by your own directions, to make inquiries respecting what you or your husband have publicly notified in the streets."

"But, sir-r-r — !" cried the unhappy porter.

"Sir!" interrupted the hitherto placid inquirer, now worked up into extreme rage, "Sir! You may carry your friendship with your M. Cabrion as far as you please, but, give me leave to tell you, you have no business to parade yourself or your friendships in the face of everybody in the streets. And I think it right, sir, to let you know a bit of my mind; which is, that you are a boasting braggart, and that I shall go at once and lay a formal complaint against you at the police office." Saying which, the individual departed in an apparently towering passion.

"Anastasie," moaned out poor Pipelet, in a dolorous voice, "I shall never survive all this! I feel but too surely that I am struck with death, — I have not a hope of escape! You hear my name is publicly exposed in the open streets, in company with that scoundrel's! He has dared to placard the hideous tale of my having entered into a treaty of friendship with him! And the innocent, unsuspecting public will read the hateful statement — remember it — repeat it — spread the detestable report! Oh, monstrous, enormous, devilish invention! None but a fiend could have had such a thought. But there must be an end to this. The measure is full, — ay, to overflowing; and things have come to such a pass that either this accursed painter or myself must perish in the deadly struggle!" And, wrought up to such a state of vigorous resolution as to completely conquer his usual apathy, M. Pipelet seized the portrait of Cabrion and rushed towards the door.

"Where are you going, Alfred?" screamed the wife.

"To the commissary of police, and, at the same time, to tear down that vile board! Then, bearing the board in one hand and the portrait in the other, I will cry aloud to the commissary, 'Defend, avenge an injured man! Deliver me from Cabrion!'"

"So do, old darling! There, hold up your head and

pluck up courage! And I tell you what, if the board is too high for you to reach, ask the man at the wine-shop to lend you his small ladder. That blackguard of a Cabrion! I only wish I had him in my power, I'd fry him for half an hour in my largest stew-pan! Why, scores of people have been publicly executed who did not deserve death a quarter as much as he does! The villain! I should like to see him just ready to have the guillotine dropped upon his head. Wouldn't I give him my blessing in a friendly way? A rascal!"

Alfred, amid all his woes, yet displayed a rare magnanimity, contrasting strongly with the vindictive spirit of his partner.

"No, no," said he; "spite of the wrongs he has done me, I would not, even if his life were in my power, 'demand his head!'"

"But I would! I would! I would!" vociferated the ferocious Anastasie. "If he had fifty heads, I would demand every one of them! I would not leave him one! But go along; make haste, Alfred, and set the commissary of police to work upon him."

"No," cried Alfred, "I desire not his blood; but I have a right to demand the perpetual imprisonment of this malicious being. My repose requires it, — my health peremptorily calls for it. The laws of my country must either grant me this reparation for all I have suffered, or I quit France. Yes, beautiful and beloved France! I turn my back on you for ever! And that is all an ungrateful nation would gain by neglecting to heal the wounds of my tortured mind;" and, bending beneath the weight of his grief, Alfred majestically quitted the lodge, like one of the ancient victims of all-conquering Fatality.

CHAPTER XIV.

CECILY.

Before we introduce the reader to the conversation between Madame Séraphin and Madame Pipelet, we must premise that Anastasie, without entertaining the very slightest suspicion of the virtue and piety of the notary, felt the greatest indignation at the severity manifested by him in the case both of Louise Morel and M. Germain; and, as a natural consequence, the angry porteress included Madame Séraphin in the same censure; but still, like a skilful politician, Madame Pipelet, for reasons we shall hereafter explain, concealed her dislike to the *femme-de-charge* under the appearance of the greatest cordiality. After having explicitly declared her extreme disapprobation of the conduct pursued by Cabrion, Madame Séraphin went on to say:

"By the way, what has become of M. Bradamanti Polidori? I wrote to him yesterday evening, but got no reply; this morning I came to see him, but he was not to be found. I trust I shall be more fortunate this time."

Madame Pipelet affected the most lively regret.

"Really," cried she, "you are doomed to be unlucky!"

"How so?"

"M. Bradamanti has not yet returned."

"Upon my word, this is enough to tire a saint!"

"So it is, I declare, Madame Séraphin. I'm sure I'm as sorry about it as if it was my own self."

"I had so much to say to him."

"It is all for the world as though you were bewitched!"

"Why, yes, it is so much the more vexatious, because I have to find all manner of excuses to run down here; for, if once M. Ferrand were to find out that I came to consult a quack doctor, he who is so devout, so scrupulous in all things, we should have a fearful scene!"

"La! He is just like Alfred, who is so silly that really he is afraid of everything and everybody!"

"And you do not know, I suppose, when M. Bradamanti will return home?"

"No, not precisely; but I know very well that he expects some one about six or seven o'clock this evening, for he told me to request the person to call again, should he not be at home at the time mentioned. So, if you will call again in the evening, you will be sure to see him."

But, as Anastasie said these words, she mentally added, "I would not have you too sure of that; in an hour's time he will be on his road to Normandy!"

"Very well, then," said Madame Séraphin, with an air of considerable chagrin. Then, pausing a brief space, she added, "I had also something to say to you, my dear Madame Pipelet. You know, I suppose, what happened to that girl, Louise Morel, whom everybody thought so good and virtuous —"

"Oh, pray don't mention her!" replied Madame Pipelet, rolling her eyes with affected horror. "It makes one's hair stand on end."

"I merely alluded to her by way of saying that we are now quite without a servant, and that, if you should chance to hear of a well-disposed, honest, and industrious young person, I should take it as a favour if you would send her to us. Upon my word, girls of good character are so difficult to be met with that one had need search in twenty places at once to find one."

"Depend upon it, Madame Séraphin, that, should I hear of anybody likely to suit you, I will let you know;

but, in my opinion, good situations are more rare even than good servants." Then, again relapsing into a fit of abstraction, Anastasie added, though mentally, "A likely story that I should send any young girl to be starved to death in your dungeon of a house; your master is too stingy and hard-hearted! The idea of throwing that poor Louise and M. Germain both in prison!"

"I need not tell you," continued Madame Séraphin, "what a still, quiet house ours is; any young person must be improved by living in a family where there is continually something to be learned; and that Louise must have been naturally a depraved creature, to turn out badly spite of the good and religious advice bestowed on her by M. Ferrand."

"No doubt; but depend upon it that, directly I hear of a young person likely to suit you, I will be sure to let you know."

"There is just one thing more I should like to mention," resumed Madame Séraphin, "and that is, that M. Ferrand would greatly prefer taking a person who had no relatives or friends, because then, you understand, having no motive for wishing to go out, she would be less exposed to danger, neither would her mind be so likely to be upset; so that, if you should happen to meet with an orphan, I think M. Ferrand would prefer taking her, in the first place, because it would be doing a good action; and, secondly, as, having neither friends nor followers, she could not have any excuse for wishing to go out. I assure you that wretched girl, Louise, gave M. Ferrand a severe lesson, I can tell you, Madame Pipelet, and one that will make him very careful what sort of a servant he engages. Only imagine such a scandalous affair occurring in a house like ours! Dreadful! Well, then, I will call again this evening to see M. Bradamanti, and, at the same time, I can have a little conversation with Mother Burette."

"Then I will say adieu, Madame Séraphin, till this

evening, when you will be quite sure of finding M. Bradamanti."

Madame Séraphin returned the salutation, and quitted the lodge.

"What a deuce of a worry she is in about Bradamanti!" said Madame Pipelet, when her visitor had disappeared. "I wonder what she wants with him? And then, too, M. Bradamanti is just as anxious to avoid seeing her before he starts for Normandy. I was dreadfully afraid she meant to stick here till he did return home, and that would have been the more awkward, as M. Bradamanti expects the same lady who came last night; I could not manage to have a squint at her then, but I am determined to-night to stare her regularly out of countenance, like I did the lady who came on the sly to visit my five-farthing commandant. Ah, the screw! the nipcheese! He has never ventured to show his face here since. However, by way of teaching him better, I shall make good use of his wood; yes, yes, my fine gentleman, it shall keep the lodge warm, as well as air your shut-up apartments. A disappointed puppy! Ha, ha, ha! Go, and be hanged with your paltry twelve francs a month! Better learn to pay people honest wages, than go flaunting about in a bright green dressing-gown, like a great lanky grasshopper! But who the plague can this lady of M. Bradamanti's be, I wonder? Is she respectable, or t'other? I should like to know, for I am as curious as a magpie; but that is not my fault; I am as God made me, so I can't help it. I know one's disposition is born with us, and so the blame does not lie at my door. Stop a bit; I've just thought of a capital plan to find out who this lady really is; and, what's more, I'll engage it turns out successful. Who is that I see coming? Ah, my king of lodgers! Your servant, M. Rodolph!" cried Madame Pipelet, saluting him, after the military fashion, by placing the back of her left hand to her wig.

It was, in truth, Rodolph, who, as yet ignorant of the death of M. d'Harville, approached gaily, saying:

"Good day to you, Madame Pipelet! Can you tell me if Mlle. Rigolette is at home? I have something to say to her, if she is."

"At home, poor girl! Why, when is she ever out? When does she lose an hour, or idle instead of working?"

"And how gets on Morel's unfortunate wife? Does she appear more reconciled to her misfortunes?"

"Yes, M. Rodolph, I am glad to say she does; and how can she be otherwise, when, thanks to you, or the generous friend whose agent you are, she is supplied with every comfort, both for herself and her children, who are as happy as fishes in the sea? Why, they want for nothing; they have good air, good food, good fires, and good beds, with a nurse to take care of them, besides Mlle. Rigolette, who, although working like a little busy bee, and without seeming to take part in their proceedings, never loses sight of them, bless you! And they have had a black doctor to see them, who says he comes from you. 'Well,' says I, when I looked at him, 'you are a funny one for a doctor, you are! I suppose, Mr. Nigger, you are physician to a company of charcoalmen, because there is no fear of your blacking your hands when you feel their pulse?' But la, M. Rodolph, I'm only joking! For what difference does colour make? Leastways your blacky seems to be a first-rate clever man, spite of his dingy face, for the first thing he did was to order a composing draught for Morel's wife, which did her a world of good!"

"Poor thing! I doubt not she is still very miserable?"

"Why, yes, M. Rodolph, naturally enough she is, for she has plenty of grief before her: her husband in a madhouse, and her daughter in prison! Ah, that poor Louise! That is the sorest of her heartaches; such a blow as that to an honest family, such as theirs has always been, is not to be got over so easily. And that

Madame Séraphin, housekeeper to the notary, who has caused all this misery, has just been here, saying all manner of cruel things about the poor girl. If I had not had my own game to play, she should not have told the tale quite her own way; but I've got a pill for her to swallow by and by, so I'll let her off easy. Why, only conceive her assurance in coming to ask me if I could not recommend her some young person to supply the place of Louise in the establishment of that old brute of a notary. What a blessed pair the master and his housekeeper are! Just fancy their preferring an orphan, if they can obtain one, to be their servant! Don't you see through that, M. Rodolph? They pretend that their reason for wishing for an orphan is, because, having neither parents nor friends, she would never wish to go out, and would be more free from interruption; but that is not it, that is all a fudge; the truth is, they think that, if they could get a poor, friendless girl into their clutches, having nobody to see her righted, they could cheat her out of her wages as much as they liked. Now is not that true, M. Rodolph?"

"No doubt," replied the person addressed, with the air of one who is thinking deeply on a subject.

The information thus afforded him as to Madame Séraphin seeking an orphan girl, to replace Louise as servant in the family of M. Ferrand, appeared to present the almost certain means of accomplishing the just punishment of the notary; and, while Madame Pipelet was yet speaking, he was arranging every point of the part he had mentally destined for Cecily, whom he purposed making the principal instrument in effecting the retributive justice he meant to inflict on the vile persecutor of Louise Morel.

"Oh, I was quite sure you would be of my opinion," continued Madame Pipelet, "and that you would agree with me in thinking that their only reason for desiring to engage an orphan girl is, that they may do her out of

her wages; and, I can tell you, I would sooner drop down dead than send any poor, friendless creature to such a house! Certainly, I don't happen to know of any one, but, if I knew of fifty, they should not enter into such a wretched house, if I could hinder them. Don't you think I'm right, M. Rodolph?"

"Madame Pipelet, will you do me a great favour?"

"Do you a favour, M. Rodolph? Lord love your heart and soul! Just say what there is I can do for you, and then see whether I will or no. Come, what is it? Shall I jump into the fire? or curl my best wig with boiling oil? or is there anybody I can worry, bite, pinch, or scold for you? Only say the word. I am wholly at your service, heart and body, your most humble slave; always stipulating that in my service there shall be no offence to Alfred's prior claims on me."

"Oh, my dear Madame Pipelet, make yourself perfectly easy! I want you to manage a little affair for me, which is this: I have got to place out a young orphan girl, who is utterly a stranger to Paris; and I wish very much, with your assistance, to obtain for her the situation vacant in M. Ferrand's establishment."

"You don't mean it? La, I never can think you are in earnest! What! Send a poor, friendless girl to live with such a miserly wretch as that hard-hearted old notary? No, no, M. Rodolph, that was not what you wanted me to do, I'm sure!"

"But, indeed, it is; why, a place is a place, and, if the young person I mentioned to you should not like it, she is not obliged to stay there; and then, don't you see, she would at once be able to maintain herself, while I should have no further uneasiness about her?"

"Oh, as far as that goes, M. Rodolph, it is your affair, not mine; and, whatever happens, remember I warned you. If, after all you have heard, you still think the place would suit your young friend, why, of course, you can please

yourself; and, then, to be sure, as far as regards the notary, there are always two sides to every picture, a for and against to every tale; he is hard-hearted as a flint-stone, obstinate as a jackass, bigoted as a Jesuit, that's true enough; but then he is of the most scrupulous punctuality in all his affairs; he gives very low wages, but, then, he pays on the nail; the living is very bad at his house, still it is the same one day as another. In a word, though it is a house where a servant must work like a horse, yet, at the same time, it is one of those dull, quiet, stupid places, where there is certainly nothing to tempt a girl to get into mischief. Certainly, Louise managed to go wrong, but that was all a chance."

"Madame Pipelet, I am going to confide a great secret to your honour."

"Well, then, upon the word and honour of Anastasie Pipelet, whose maiden name was Gulimard, as true as there is a God and heaven, and that Alfred always wears green coats, I will be silent as a stockfish!"

"You must not breathe a word to M. Pipelet."

"That I won't, I swear by the head of that dear old duck himself, if it relates to a proper and correct affair."

"Surely, Madame Pipelet, you have too good an opinion of me to suppose, for a minute, that I would insult your chaste ears with anything that was not?"

"Well, then, go it! Let's know all about it, and, I promise you, Alfred shall never be the wiser, be it what it may. Bless you! he is as easy to cheat as a child of six years old."

"I rely implicitly on you; therefore listen to my words."

"I will, my king of lodgers; and remember that we are now sworn friends for life or for death. So go on with your story."

"The young person I spoke to you about has, unfortunately, committed one serious fault."

"I was sure of it! Why, Lord bless you, if I had not married Alfred when I was fifteen years of age, I dare say I should have committed fifties and hundreds of faults! I? There, just as you see. I was like a barrel of gunpowder at the very sight or mention of a smart young fellow. Luckily for me, Pipelet extinguished the warmth of my nature in the coolness of his own virtue; if he had not, I can't say what might have happened, for I did dearly love the gay deceivers! I merely mention this to say that, if the young person has only done wrong once, then there are great hopes of her."

"I trust, indeed, she will atone for her past misconduct. She was living in service, in Germany, with a relation of mine, and the partner of her crime was the son of this relative. Do you understand?"

"Do I? Don't I? Go along with you! I understand as well as though I had committed the fault myself."

"The angry mistress, upon discovering her servant's guilt, drove her from her house; but the young man was weak enough to quit his paternal roof, and to bring the unfortunate girl to Paris."

"Well, la, M. Rodolph! What else could you expect? Why, young people will be young people. I'm sure I—"

"After this act of folly came stern reflection, rendered still more severe by the fact of the slender stock of money he possessed being exhausted. In this dilemma, my young relation applied to me; and I consented to furnish him with the means of returning home, on condition of his leaving behind him the companion of his flight, whom I undertook to place out in some respectable capacity."

"Well, I declare, I could not have done more for a son, if it had pleased Heaven — and Pipelet — that I should have had one!"

"I am delighted that you approve of my conduct; still, as the young girl is a stranger, and has no one to give her a recommendation, I fear it will be rather dif-

ficult to get her placed. Now, if you would tell Madame Séraphin that a relation of yours, living in Germany, has sent her to you, with a very excellent character, the notary would, possibly, take her into his service; and I should be doubly delighted. Cecily (for that is her name), having only once gone astray, would, doubtless, soon regain the right path in a house as severe and saintly as that of the notary's; and it is for that reason I am desirous of seeing the poor girl enter into the service of M. Ferrand; and, of course, if introduced by so respectable a person as yourself, Madame Pipelet, there would be no fear of her obtaining the place."

"Oh, M. Rodolph!"

"Yes, indeed, my good madame, I am sure that one word from so justly esteemed an individual as you — "

"Oh, my king of lodgers!"

"I repeat that, if you would patronise the young girl so far as to introduce her to Madame Séraphin, I have no fears but that she would be accepted; whereas, you know, if I were to accompany her to the notary's house — "

"I see what you mean; to be sure, it would look just as queer as if I were to introduce a young man. Well, I will do what you wish; it will be serving old Séraphin out as she deserves. I can tell you I have had a crow to pluck with her a long time, and this seems a famous way of serving her out; besides, it's a good lark, any way. So look upon the thing as done, M. Rodolph. I'll cram the old woman well. I will tell her that a relation of my own, long established in Germany, has just died, as well as her husband, leaving a daughter wholly dependent on me."

"Capital! Well, then, without saying anything more to Madame Séraphin, you shall take Cecily to M. Ferrand. All you will have to say is, that, not having seen or heard anything of your relation during the last twenty years, you consider it best to let her speak for herself."

"Ah, but then, if the girl only jabbers German?"

"I assure you she speaks French perfectly well. I will give her proper instructions, therefore you need do nothing more than strongly recommend her to Madame Séraphin, — or, stay, upon second thoughts, perhaps you had better not say any more than you have done on the subject, for fear she should suspect you want to force the girl upon her. You know that, frequently, the very asking a thing produces a refusal."

"I should think I did, too! Why, that was the way I got rid of all the flattering lovers that came about me. If they had never asked me a favour, I don't know what I might have done."

"It is always the case; therefore say nothing more to Madame Séraphin than just this, that Cecily is an orphan, and a stranger here, very young and very pretty, that she will be a heavy burden to you, and that you are not particularly fond of her, in consequence of having long since quarrelled with her mother, and, consequently, not retaining a very great affection for the charge bequeathed to your care."

"What a deep one you are! But never mind, there's a pair of us! I say, M. Rodolph, is it not odd you and I should understand each other so well? Ah, we two should have suited one another to a hair! Gracious, M. Rodolph, when I think what might have happened, if we had chanced to have met when I was such a tender-hearted, susceptible young creature, and so fond of handsome young men, — don't you fancy we should have seemed like made for one another, — eh, M. Rodolph?"

"Hush! Suppose M. Pipelet — "

"I forgot him, poor old duck! His brain is half turned since this last abominable prank of Cabrion's; but I'll tell you about that another time. As for your young relation, make yourself quite easy; I will undertake to play my part so well that old Séraphin shall come to me, and beg to have her as a servant."

"And if you succeed, Madame Pipelet, I have one hundred francs quite at your service. I am not rich, but—"

"Are you making fun of me, M. Rodolph, or do you imagine I am doing what I do for the sake of gain? I declare to God it's out of nothing but pure friendship! One hundred francs! That's handsome, however!"

"Why, I consider it but an act of justice, as well as gratitude, to offer you a sum which, if left several months on my hands, the girl must soon have cost me."

"Ah, well, then, since I can serve you by accepting your hundred francs, of course I have no further objection, M. Rodolph; but we drew a famous prize in the lottery when you came into the house, and I don't care who hears me say it, for I'd as lief cry it on the housetops. You are the very prince and king of good lodgers! Halloa, there is a hackney-coach! No doubt, the lady M. Bradamanti expects; I could not manage to see her well when she came yesterday, but I'll have a precious good stare at her this time; added to which, I've got a capital plan for finding out her name. Come, you shall see me go to work; it will be a famous lark for us!"

"No, I thank you, Madame Pipelet; I have not the slightest curiosity respecting either the name or features of this lady," returned Rodolph, withdrawing to the very end of the lodge.

"Where do you wish to go, madame?" cried Anastasie, rushing towards the female, who was entering.

"I am going to M. Bradamanti's," returned the person addressed, visibly annoyed at having her progress thus arrested.

"He is not at home."

"You are mistaken."

"Oh, no, I am not!" said the porteress, skilfully contriving so to place herself as to command a perfect view of the stranger's features. "M. Bradamanti has gone

out, positively, absolutely gone out; that is to say, he is not at home, except to one lady."

"'Tis I, he expects me; and pray, my good woman, allow me to pass; you are really troublesome!"

"Your name, madame, if you please? I shall soon see if it is the name of the person M. Bradamanti desired me to admit. Should yours not be the right name, you don't go up-stairs, unless you first trample on my body!"

"Is it possible he could be so imprudent as to tell you my name?" cried the female, with as much surprise as uneasiness.

"Certainly he did, madame, or how should I know it?"

"How very thoughtless!" murmured the stranger. Then, after a momentary hesitation, she said, impatiently, in a low voice, and as if fearful of being overheard, "My name is D'Orbigny."

Rodolph started at the word, as it reached his ear, for it was the name of Madame d'Harville's mother-in-law. Advancing, therefore, from the dark corner in which he stood, he managed, by the light of the lamp, to obtain a clear view of the stranger, in whose features he easily traced the portrait so skilfully drawn by Clémence of the author of all her sufferings.

"Madame d'Orbigny!" repeated Madame Pipelet, in a loud tone. "Ah, then you may go up-stairs; that is the name M. Bradamanti gave me."

Madame d'Harville's mother-in-law waited for no second bidding, but rapidly passed by the lodge.

"Well done us!" shouted the porteress, with a triumphant air; "I have caught my fish, done the great lady! Now, then, I know her name, — she is Madame d'Orbigny. That wasn't a bad scheme of mine, was it, M. Rodolph? But what the plague is the matter with you? How sad and thoughtful you have grown all of a minute!"

"This lady has been to see M. Bradamanti before, has she not?"

"Yes, she was here yesterday evening; and, directly she was gone, M. Bradamanti went out, most probably, to take his place in the diligence for to-day, because, when he came back, he asked me to take his trunk to the coach office, as he could not trust that little rascal, Tortillard."

"And do you know where M. Bradamanti is going?"

"To Normandy, by way of Alençon."

Rodolph called to his remembrance that Aubiers, the seat of M. d'Orbigny, was situated in Normandy. There was no longer a doubt that the charlatan was proceeding to the paternal home of Clémence, and, as a matter of course, to aid and assist in some scheme of wickedness.

"The departure of M. Bradamanti will put old Séraphin out preciously!" resumed Madame Pipelet. "I can't make out what she wants with him; but she seems as much bent upon seeing him as he is on avoiding her; for he charged me particularly not to tell her that he leaves Paris to-night at six o'clock. So, when she calls again, she will find nobody at home; that will give me an opportunity of talking to her about your young person. Let's see, what is her name? Cissy —"

"Cecily!"

"Ah, I see! Just clap two more letters to the word I said, — that'll do. I must tie a knot in the corner of my handkerchief, that I may be able to recollect this bother of a name. Ciss — Cissy — Cecily — I've got it!"

"Well, now, I think it is time for me to visit Mlle. Rigolette," said Rodolph to Madame Pipelet, as he quitted the lodge.

"And when you come down-stairs, M. Rodolph, I hope you will just speak a word or two to my dear old darling of a husband. He has had a deal of trouble lately, and I know it will be a great relief to him to tell you all

about it. That beast of a Cabrion has been at his old tricks again!"

"Be assured, Madame Pipelet, I shall always be ready to sympathise with your worthy husband in all his troubles."

And with these words Rodolph, strangely preoccupied with the recent visit of Madame d'Orbigny to Polidori, slowly pursued his way to the apartment of Mlle. Rigolette.

END OF VOLUME III.

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THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS.

CHAPTER I.

RIGOLETTE'S FIRST SORROW.

RIGOLETTE'S apartment was still in all its extreme nicety; the large silver watch placed over the mantelpiece, in a small boxwood stand, denoted the hour of four. The severe cold weather having ceased, the thrifty little needlewoman had not lighted her stove.

From the window, a corner of blue sky was scarcely perceptible over the masses of irregularly built roofs, garrets, and tall chimneys, which bounded the horizon on the other side of the street. Suddenly a sunbeam, which, as it were, wandered for a moment between two high gables, came for an instant to purple with its bright rays the windows of the young girl's chamber.

Rigolette was at work, seated by her window; and the soft shadow of her charming profile stood out from the transparent light of the glass as a cameo of rosy whiteness on a silver ground. Brilliant hues played on her jet black hair, twisted in a knot at the back of her head, and shaded with a warm amber colour the ivory of her industrious little fingers, which plied the needle with incomparable activity. The long folds of her brown gown, confined at the waist by the bands of her green apron, half concealed her straw-seated chair, and her pretty feet rested on the edge of a stool before her.

Like a rich lord, who sometimes amuses himself in hiding the walls of a cottage beneath splendid hangings, the setting sun for a moment lighted up this little chamber with a thousand dazzling fires, throwing his golden tints on the curtains of gray and green stuff, and making the walnut-tree furniture glisten with brightness, and the dry-rubbed floor look like heated copper; whilst it encircled in a wire-work of gold the grisette's bird-cage. But, alas! in spite of the exciting splendour of this sun-ray, the two canaries (male and female) flitted about uneasily, and, contrary to their usual habit, did not sing a note. This was because, contrary to her usual habit, Rigolette did not sing. The three never warbled without one another; almost invariably the cheerful and matin song of the latter called forth that of the birds, who, more lazy, did not leave their nests as early as their mistress. Then there were rivalries, — contentions of clear, sonorous, pearly, silvery notes, in which the birds had not always the advantage.

Rigolette did not sing, because, for the first time in her life, she experienced a sorrow. Up to this time, the sight of the misery of the Morels had often affected her; but such sights are too familiar to the poorer classes to cause them any very lasting melancholy. After having, almost every day, succoured these unfortunates as far as was in her power, sincerely wept with and for them, the young girl felt herself at the same time moved and satisfied, — moved by their misfortunes, and satisfied at having shown herself pitiful. But this was not a sorrow. Rigolette's natural gaiety soon regained its empire; and then, without egotism, but by a simple fact of comparison, she found herself so happy in her little chamber, after leaving the horrible den of the Morels, that her momentary sadness speedily disappeared.

This lightness of impression was so little affected by personal feeling, that, by a mode of extremely delicate reasoning, the grisette considered it almost a duty to aid

those more unhappy than herself, that she might thus unscrupulously enjoy an existence so very precarious and entirely dependent on her labour, but which, compared with the fearful distress of the lapidary's family, appeared to her almost luxurious.

"In order to sing without compunction, when we have near us persons so much to be pitied," she said, naïvely, "we must have been as charitable to them as possible."

Before we inform our reader the cause of Rigolette's first sorrow, we are desirous to assure him, or her, completely as to the virtue of this young girl. We are sorry to use the word virtue, — a serious, pompous, solemn word, which almost always brings with it ideas of painful sacrifice, of painful struggle against the passions, of austere meditations on the final close of all things here below. Such was not the virtue of Rigolette. She had neither deeply struggled nor meditated; she had worked, and laughed, and sung. Her prudence, as she called it, when speaking frankly and sincerely to Rodolph, was with her a question of time, — she had not the leisure to be in love. Particularly lively, industrious, and orderly, order, work, and gaiety had often, unknown to herself, defended, sustained, saved her.

It may be deemed, perchance, that this morality is light, frivolous, casual; but of what consequence is the cause, so that the effect endures? Of what consequence are the directions of the roots of a plant, provided the flower blooms pure, expanded, and full of perfume?

Apropos of our utopianisms, as to the encouragement, help, and recompenses which society ought to grant to artisans remarkable for their eminent social qualities, we have alluded to that protection of virtue (one of the projects of the Emperor, by the way). Let us suppose this admirable idea realised. One of the real philanthropists whom the Emperor proposed to employ in searching after worth has discovered Rigolette. Abandoned without advice, without aid, exposed to all the

perils of poverty, to all the seductions with which youth and beauty are surrounded, this charming girl has remained pure; her honest, hard-working life might serve for a model and example. Would not this young creature deserve, not a mere recompense, not succour only, but some impressive words of approbation and encouragement, which would give her a consciousness of her own worth, exalt her in her own eyes, and lay on her obligations for the future? At least she would know that she was followed by eyes full of solicitude and protection in the difficult path in which she is progressing with so much courage and serenity; she would know that, if one day the want of work or sickness threatened to destroy the equilibrium of the poor and occupied life, which depends solely on work and health, a slight help, due to her former deserts, would be given to her.

People, no doubt, will exclaim against the impossibility of this tutelary surveillance, which would surround persons particularly worthy of interest through their previous excellent lives. It seems to us that society has already resolved this problem. Has it not already imagined the superintendence of the police, for life or for a period, for the most useful purpose of constantly controlling the conduct of dangerous persons, noted for the infamy of their former lives? Why does not society exercise also a superintendence of moral charity?

But let us leave the lofty stilts of our utopianisms, and return to the cause of Rigolette's first sorrow.

With the exception of Germain, a well-behaved, open-hearted young man, the grisette's neighbours had all, at first, begun on terms of familiarity, believing her offers of good neighbourship were little flirtations; but these gentlemen had been compelled to admit, with as much astonishment as annoyance, that they found in Rigolette an amiable and mirthful companion for their Sunday excursions, a pleasant neighbour, and a kind-hearted

creature, but not a mistress. Their surprise and their annoyance, at first very great, gradually gave way before the frank and even temper of the grisette; and then, as she had sagaciously said to Rodolph, her neighbours were proud on Sundays to have on their arms a pretty girl, who was an honour to them in every way (Rigolette was quite regardless of appearances), and who only cost them the share of the moderate pleasures, whose value was doubled by her presence and nice appearance. Besides, the dear girl was so easily contented! In her days of penury she dined well and gaily off a morsel of warm cake, which she nibbled with all the might of her little white teeth; after which, she amused herself so much with a walk on the boulevards or in the arcades.

If our readers feel but little sympathy with Rigolette, they will at least confess that a person must be very absurd, or very cruel, to refuse once a week these simple amusements to so delightful a creature, who, besides having no right to be jealous, never prevented her cavaliers from consoling themselves for her cruelty by flirtations with other damsels.

François Germain alone never founded any vain hopes on the familiarity of the young girl, but, either from instinct of heart or delicacy of mind, he guessed from the first day how very agreeable the singular companionship of Rigolette might be made.

What might be imagined happened, and Germain fell passionately in love with his neighbour, without daring to say a word to her of his love.

Far from imitating his predecessors, who, convinced of the vanity of their pursuit, had consoled themselves with other loves, without being on that account the less on good terms with their neighbour, Germain had most supremely enjoyed his intimacy with the young girl, passing with her not only his Sunday but every evening when he was not engaged. During these long hours Rigolette was, as usual, merry and laughing; Germain

tender, attentive, serious, and often somewhat sad. This sadness was his only drawback, for his manners, naturally good, were not to be compared with the foppery of M. Girandeau, the commercial traveller, alias bagman, or with the noisy eccentricities of Cabrion; but M. Girandeau by his unending loquacity, and the painter by his equally interminable fun, took the lead of Germain, whose quiet composure rather astonished his little neighbour, the grisette.

Rigolette then had not, as yet, testified any decided preference for any one of her beaux; but as she was by no means deficient in judgment, she soon discovered that Germain alone united all the qualities requisite for making a reasonable woman happy.

Having stated all these facts, we will inquire why Rigolette was sad, and why neither she nor her birds sang. Her oval and fresh-looking face was rather pale; her large black eyes, usually gay and brilliant, were slightly dulled and veiled; whilst her whole look bespoke unusual fatigue. She had been working nearly all the night; from time to time she looked sorrowfully at a letter which lay open on a table near her. This letter had been addressed to her by Germain, and contained as follows:

"Prison of the Conciergerie.

"Mademoiselle: — The place from which I address you will sufficiently prove to you the extent of my misfortune, — I am locked up as a robber. I am guilty in the eyes of all the world, and yet I am bold enough to write to you! It is because it would, indeed, be dreadful to me to believe that you consider me as a degraded criminal. I beseech you not to condemn me until you have perused this letter. If you discard me, that will be the final blow, and will indeed overwhelm me. I will tell you all that has passed. For some time I had left the Rue du Temple, but I knew through poor Louise that the Morel family, in whom you and I took such deep interest, were daily more and more wretched. Alas, my pity for these poor people has been my destruction! I do not repent it, but my fate is very cruel. Last night I had

stayed very late at M. Ferrand's, occupied with business of importance. In the room in which I was at work was a bureau, in which my employer shut up every day the work I had done. This evening he appeared much disturbed and troubled, and said to me, 'Do not leave until these accounts are finished, and then put them in the bureau, the key of which I will leave with you;' and then he left the room. When my work was done I opened the drawer to put it away, when, mechanically, my eyes were attracted by an open letter, on which I read the name of Jérome Morel, the lapidary. I confess that, seeing that it referred to this unfortunate man, I had the indiscretion to read this letter; and I learnt that the artisan was to be arrested next day on an overdue bill of thirteen hundred francs, at the suit of M. Ferrand, who, under an assumed name, had imprisoned him. This information was from an agent employed by M. Ferrand. I knew enough of the situation of the Morel family to be aware of the terrible blow which the imprisonment of their only support must inflict upon them, and I was equally distressed and indignant. Unfortunately I saw in the same drawer an open box, with two thousand francs in gold in it. At this moment I heard Louise coming up the stairs, and without reflecting on the seriousness of my offence, but profiting by the opportunity which chance offered, I took thirteen hundred francs, went to her in the passage, and put the money in her hand, saying, 'They are going to arrest your father to-morrow at daybreak, for thirteen hundred francs, — here they are. Save him, but do not say that the money comes from me. M. Ferrand is a bad man.' You see, mademoiselle, my intention was good, but my conduct culpable. I conceal nothing from you, but this is my excuse. By dint of saving for a long time I had realised, and placed with a banker, the sum of fifteen hundred francs, but the cashier of the banker never came to the office before noon. Morel was to be arrested at daybreak, and therefore it was necessary that she should have the money so as to pay it in good time; if not, even if I could have gone in the day to release him from prison, still he would be arrested and carried off in presence of his wife, whom such a blow must have killed. Besides, the heavy costs of the writ would have been added to the expenses of the lapidary. You will understand, I dare say, that all these new misfortunes would not have befallen me if I had been able to restore the thirteen hundred francs I had taken back again to the bureau before M. Ferrand discovered anything; unfortunately, I fell into that mistake. I left M. Ferrand's, and was no longer under the impression of indignation and pity which had impelled me to the step. I began to reflect upon all the dangers of my position. A thousand fears

then came to assail me. I knew the notary's severity, and he might come after I left and search in his bureau and discover the theft; for in his eyes — in the eyes of the world — it is a theft. These thoughts overwhelmed me, and, late as it was, I ran to the banker's to supplicate him to give me my money instantly. I should have found an excuse for this urgent request, and then I should have returned to M. Ferrand and replaced the money I had taken. By an unlucky chance, the banker had gone to Belleville for two days, to his country-house, where he was engaged in some plantations. Everything seemed to conspire against me. I waited for daybreak with intense anxiety, and hastened to Belleville, — the banker had just left for Paris. I returned, saw him, obtained my money, hastened to M. Ferrand; everything was discovered. But this is only a portion of my misfortunes. The notary at once accused me of having robbed him of fifteen thousand francs in bank-notes, which, he declared, were in the drawer of the bureau, with the two thousand francs in gold. This was a base accusation, — an infamous lie! I confess myself guilty of the first abstraction, but, by all that is most sacred in the world, I swear to you, mademoiselle, that I am innocent of the second. I never saw a bank-note in the drawer. There were only two thousand francs in gold, from which I took the thirteen hundred francs I have mentioned. This is the truth, mademoiselle. I am under this terrible accusation, and yet I affirm that you ought to know me incapable of a lie. But will you, — do you believe me? Alas, as M. Ferrand said, 'he who has taken a small sum may equally have taken a large amount, and his word does not deserve belief.' I have always seen you so good and devoted to the unhappy, mademoiselle, and I know you are so frank and liberal-minded, that your heart will guide you in the just appreciation of the truth, I hope. I do not ask any more. Give credit to my words, and you will find in me as much to pity as to blame; for, I repeat to you, my intention was good, and circumstances impossible to foresee have destroyed me. Oh, Mlle. Rigolette, I am very unhappy! If you knew in the midst of what a set of persons I am doomed to exist until my trial is over! Yesterday they took me to a place which they call the dépôt of the prefecture of police. I cannot tell you what I felt when, after having gone up a dark staircase, I reached a door with an iron wicket, which was opened and soon closed upon me. I was so troubled in my mind that I could not, at first, distinguish anything. A hot and fetid air came upon me, and I heard a loud noise of voices mingled with sinister laughs, angry exclamations, and depraved songs. I remained motionless at the door for awhile, looking at the stone flooring of the apartment, and neither

daring to advance nor lift up my eyes, thinking that everybody was looking at me. They were not, however, thinking of me; for a prisoner more or less does not at all disturb these men. At last I ventured to look up, and, oh, what horrid countenances! What ragged wretches! What dirty and bespattered garments! All the exterior marks of misery and vice! There were forty or fifty seated, standing, or lying on benches secured to the wall, — vagrants, robbers, assassins, and all who had been apprehended during the night and day. When they perceived me I found a sad consolation in seeing that they did not recognise me as belonging or known to them. Some of them looked at me with an insulting and derisive air, and then began to talk amongst themselves in a low tone, and in some horrible jargon, not one word of which did I understand. After a short time one of the most brutal amongst them came, and, slapping me on the shoulder, asked me for money to pay my footing. I gave them some silver, hoping thus to purchase repose; but it was not enough, and they demanded more, which I refused. Then several of them surrounded me and assailed me with threats and imprecations, and were proceeding to extremities, when, fortunately for me, a turnkey entered, who had been attracted by the noise. I complained to him, and he insisted on their restoring to me the money I had given them already, adding that, if I liked to pay a small fee, I should go to what is called the pistole; that is, be in a cell to myself. I accepted the offer gratefully, and left these ruffians in the midst of their loud menaces for the future; 'for,' said they, 'we are sure to meet again, when I could not get away from them.' The turnkey conducted me to a cell, where I passed the rest of the night. It is from here that I now write to you, Mlle. Rigolette. Directly after my examination I shall be taken to another prison, called La Force, where I expect to meet many of my companions in the station-house. The turnkey, interested by my grief and tears, has promised me to forward this letter to you, although such kindnesses are strictly forbidden. I ask, Mlle. Rigolette, a last service of your friendship, if, indeed, you do not blush now for such an intimacy. In case you will kindly grant my request, it is this: With this letter you will receive a small key, and a line for the porter of the house I live in, Boulevard St. Denis, No. 11. I inform him that you will act as if it were myself with respect to everything that belongs to me, and that he is to attend to your instructions. He will take you to my room, and you will have the goodness to open my *secrétaire* with the key I send you herewith. In this you will find a large packet containing different papers, which I beg of you to take care of for me. One of them was intended for you, as you will

see by the address; others have been written of you, in happier days. Do not be angry. I did not think they would ever come to your knowledge. I beg you, also, to take the small sum of money which is in this drawer, as well as a satin bag, which contains a small orange silk handkerchief, which you wore when we used to go out on Sundays, and which you gave me on the day I quitted the Rue du Temple. I should wish that, excepting a little linen which you will be so good as send to me at La Force, you would sell the furniture and things I possess; for, whether acquitted or found guilty, I must of necessity be obliged to quit Paris. Where shall I go? What are my resources? God only knows. Madame Bouvard, the saleswoman of the Temple, who has already sold and bought for me many things, will perhaps take all the furniture, etc., at once. She is a very fair-dealing woman, and this would save you a great deal of trouble, for I know how precious your time is. I have paid my rent in advance, and I have, therefore, only to ask you to give a small present to the porter. Excuse, mademoiselle, the trouble of these details; but you are the only person in the world to whom I dare and can address myself. I might, perhaps, have asked one of M. Ferrand's clerks to do this service for me, as we were on friendly terms, but I feared his curiosity as to certain papers. Several concern you, as I have said, and others relate to the sad events in my life. Ah, believe me, Mlle. Rigolette, if you grant me this last favour, this last proof of former regard, it will be my only consolation under the great affliction in which I am plunged; and, in spite of all, I hope you will not refuse me. I also beg of you to give me permission to write to you sometimes. It will be so consoling, so comforting to me, to be able to pour out my heavy sorrows into a kind heart. Alas, I am alone in the world, — no one takes the slightest interest in me! This isolation was before most painful to me. Think what it must be now! And yet I am honest, and have the consciousness of never having injured any one, and of always having, at the peril of my life, testified my aversion for what is wicked and wrong; as you will see by the papers, which I pray of you to take care of, and which you may read. But when I say this, who will believe me? M. Ferrand is respected by all the world; his reputation for probity is long established; he has a just cause of accusation against me, and he will crush me. I resign myself at once to my fate. Now, Mlle. Rigolette, if you do believe me, you will not, I hope, feel any contempt for me, but pity me; and you will, perhaps, carry your generosity so far as to come one day, — some Sunday (alas, what recollections that word brings up!) — some Sunday, to see me in the reception-room of my prison. But no, no; I never

could dare to see you in such a place! Yet you are so good, so kind, that — if — I am compelled to break off this letter and send it to you at once, with the key, and a line for the porter, which I write in great haste. The turnkey has come to tell me that I am going directly before the magistrate. Adieu, adieu, Mlle. Rigolette! Do not discard me, for my hope is in you, and in you only! FRANÇOIS GERMAIN.

"P. S. — If you reply, address your letter to me at the prison of La Force."

We may now divine the cause of Rigolette's first sorrow.

Her excellent heart was deeply wounded at a misfortune of which she had no suspicion until that moment. She believed unhesitatingly in the entire veracity of the statement of Germain, the unfortunate son of the Schoolmaster.

Not very strait-laced, she thought her old neighbour exaggerated his fault immensely. To save the unhappy father of a family, he had momentarily appropriated a sum which he thought he could instantly refund. This action, in the grisette's eyes, was but generous.

By one of those contradictions common to women, and especially to women of her class, this young girl, who until then had not felt for Germain more than her other neighbours, but a kind and mirthful friendship, now experienced for him a decided preference. As soon as she knew that he was unfortunate, unjustly accused, and a prisoner, his remembrance effaced that of all his former rivals. Yet Rigolette did not all at once feel intense love, but a warm and sincere affection, full of pity and determined devotion, — a sentiment which was the more new with her in consequence of the better sensations it brought with it.

Such was the moral position of Rigolette when Rodolph entered her chamber, having first rapped very discreetly at the door.

"Good morning, neighbour," said Rodolph to Rigolette; "do not let me disturb you."

"Not at all, neighbour. On the contrary, I am delighted to see you, for I have had something to vex me dreadfully."

"Why, in truth, you look very pale, and appear as though you had been weeping."

"Indeed, I have been weeping, and for a good reason. Poor Germain! There — read!" And Rigolette handed the letter of the prisoner to Rodolph. "Is not that enough to break one's heart? You told me you took an interest in him, — now's the time to prove it!" she added, whilst Rodolph was attentively reading the letter. "Is that wicked old M. Ferrand at war with all the world? First he attacked that poor Louise, and now he assails Germain. Oh, I am not ill-natured; but if some great harm happened to this notary, I should really be glad! To accuse such an honest young man of having stolen fifteen thousand francs from him! Germain, too! He who was honesty itself! And such a steady, serious young man; and so sad, too! Oh, he is indeed to be pitied, in the midst of all these wretches in his prison! Ah, M. Rodolph, from to-day I begin to see that life is not all *couleur-de-rose.*"

"And what do you propose to do, my little neighbour?"

"What do I mean to do? Why, of course, all that Germain asks of me, and as quickly as possible. I should have been gone before now, but for this work, which is required in great haste, and which I must take instantly to the Rue St. Honoré, on my way to Germain's room, where I am going to get the papers he speaks of. I have passed part of the night at work, that I might be forward. I shall have so many things to do besides my usual work that I must be excessively methodical. In the first place, Madame Morel is very anxious that I should see Louise in prison. That will be a hard task, but I shall try to do it. Unfortunately, I do not know to whom I should address myself."

"I had thought of that."

"You, neighbour?"

"Here is an order."

"How fortunate! Can't you procure me also an order for the prison of poor, unhappy Germain? He would be so delighted!"

"I will also find you the means of seeing Germain."

"Oh, thank you, M. Rodolph."

"You will not be afraid, then, of going to his prison?"

"Certainly not; although my heart will beat very violently the first time. But that's nothing. When Germain was free, was he not always ready to anticipate all my wishes, and take me to the theatre, for a walk, or read to me of an evening? Well, and now he is in trouble, it is my turn. A poor little mouse like me cannot do much, I know that well enough; but all I can do I will do, that he may rely upon. He shall find that I am a sincere friend. But, M. Rodolph, there is one thing which pains me, and that is that he should doubt me, — that he should suppose me capable of despising him! I! — and for what, I should like to know? That old notary accuses him of robbery. I know it is not true. Germain's letter has proved to me that he is innocent, even if I had thought him guilty. You have only to see him, and you would feel certain that he is incapable of a bad action. A person must be as wicked as M. Ferrand to assert such atrocious falsehoods."

"Bravo, neighbour; I like your indignation."

"Oh, how I wish I were a man, that I might go to this notary and say to him, 'Oh, you say that Germain has robbed you, do you? Well, then, that's for you! And that he cannot steal from you, at all events?' And thump — thump —thump, I would beat him till I couldn't stand over him."

"You administer justice very expeditiously," said Rodolph, smiling.

"Because it makes my blood boil. And, as Germain

says in his letter, all the world will side with his employer, because he is rich and looked up to, whilst Germain is poor and unprotected, unless you will come to his assistance, M. Rodolph, — you who know such benevolent persons. Do not you think that something could be done?"

"He must await his sentence. Once acquitted, as I believe he will be, he will not want for proofs of the interest taken in him. But listen, neighbour; for I know I may rely on your discretion."

"Oh, yes, M. Rodolph, I never blab."

"Well, then, no one must know — not even Germain himself — that he has friends who are watching over him, — for he has friends."

"Really!"

"Very powerful and devoted."

"It would give him much courage to know that."

"Unquestionably; but perhaps he might not keep it to himself. Then M. Ferrand, alarmed, would be on his guard, — his suspicions would be aroused; and, as he is very cunning, it would become very difficult to catch him, which would be most annoying; for not only must Germain's innocence be made clear, but his denouncer must be unmasked."

"I understand, M. Rodolph."

"It is the same with Louise; and I bring you this order to see her, that you may beg of her not to tell any person what she disclosed to me. She will know what that means."

"I understand, M. Rodolph."

"In a word, let Louise beware of complaining in prison of her master's wickedness. This is most important. But she must conceal nothing from the barrister who will come from me to talk with her as to the grounds of her defence. Be sure you tell her all this."

"Make yourself easy, neighbour, I will forget nothing; I have an excellent memory. But, when we talk of

goodness, it is you who are so good and kind. If any one is in trouble, then you come directly."

"I have told you, my good little neighbour, that I am but a poor clerk; but when I meet with good persons who deserve protection, I instantly tell a benevolent individual who has entire confidence in me, and they are helped at once. That's all I do in the matter."

"And where are you lodging, now you have given up your chamber to the Morels?"

"I live in a furnished lodging."

"Oh, how I should hate that! To be where all the world has been before you, it is as if everybody had been in your place."

"I am only there at nights, and then —"

"I understand, — it is less disagreeable. Yet I shouldn't like it, M. Rodolph. My home made me so happy, I had got into such a quiet way of living, that I did not think it was possible I should ever know a sorrow. And yet, you see — But no, I cannot describe to you the blow which Germain's misfortune has brought upon me. I have seen the Morels, and others beside, who were very much to be pitied certainly. But, at best, misery is misery; and amongst poor folk, who look for it, it does not surprise them, and they help one another as well as they can. To-day it is one, to-morrow it is another. As for oneself, what with courage and good spirit, one extricates oneself. But to see a poor young man, honest and good, who has been your friend for a long time, — to see him accused of robbery, and imprisoned and huddled up with criminals! — ah, really, M. Rodolph, I cannot get over that; it is a misfortune I had never thought of, and it quite upsets me."

"Courage, courage! Your spirits will return when your friend is acquitted."

"Oh, yes, he must be acquitted. The judges have only to read his letter to me, and that would be enough, — would it not, M. Rodolph?"

"Really, this letter has all the appearance of truth. You must let me have a copy of it, for it will be necessary for Germain's defence."

"Certainly, M. Rodolph. If I did not write such a scrawl, in spite of the lessons which good Germain gave me, I would offer to copy it myself; but my writing is so large, so crooked, and has so many, many faults."

"I will only ask you to trust the letter with me until to-morrow morning."

"There it is; but you will take great care of it, I hope. I have burnt all the notes which M. Cabrion and M. Girandeau wrote me in the beginning of our acquaintance, with flaming hearts and doves at the top of the paper, when they thought I was to be caught by their tricks and cajoleries; but this poor letter of Germain's I will keep carefully, as well as the others, if he writes me any more; for they, you know, M. Rodolph, will show in my favour that he has asked these small services, — won't they, M. Rodolph?"

"Most assuredly; and they will prove that you are the best little friend any one can desire. But, now I think of it, instead of going alone to Germain's room, shall I accompany you?"

"With pleasure, neighbour. The night is coming on, and, in the evening, I do not like to be alone in the streets; besides that, I have my work to carry nearly as far as the Palais Royal. But perhaps it will fatigue and annoy you to go so far?"

"Not at all. We will have a coach."

"Really! Oh, how pleased I should be to go in a coach if I had not so much to make me melancholy! And I really must be melancholy, for this is the first day since I have been here that I have not sung during the day. My birds are really quite astonished. Poor little dears! They cannot make it out. Two or three times Papa Crétu has piped a little to try me; I endeavoured to answer him, but, after a minute or two, I began

to cry. Ramonette then began; but I could not answer one any better than the other."

"What singular names you have given your birds: Papa Crétu and Ramonette!"

"Why, M. Rodolph, my birds are the joy of my solitude, — my best friends; and I have given them the names of the worthy couple who were the joy of my childhood, and were also my best friends, not forgetting that, to complete the resemblance, Papa Crétu and Ramonette were gay, and sang like birds."

"Ah, now, yes, I remember, your adopted parents were called so."

"Yes, neighbour, they are ridiculous names for birds, I know; but that concerns no one but myself. And besides, it was in this very point that Germain showed his good heart."

"In what way?"

"Why, M. Girandeau and M. Cabrion — especially M. Cabrion — were always making their jokes on the names of my birds. To call a canary Papa Crétu! There never was such nonsense as M. Cabrion made of it, and his jests were endless. If it was a cock bird, he said, 'Why, that would be well enough to call him Crétu. As to Ramonette, that's well enough for a hen canary, for it resembles Ramona.' In fact, he quite wore my patience out, and for two Sundays I would not go out with him in order to teach him a lesson; and I told him very seriously, that if he began his tricks, which annoyed me so much, we should never go out together again."

"What a bold resolve!"

"Yes, it was really a sacrifice on my part, M. Rodolph, for I was always looking forward with delight to my Sundays, and I was very much tried by being kept in all alone in such beautiful weather. But that's nothing. I preferred sacrificing my Sundays to hearing M. Cabrion continue to make ridicule of those whom

I respected. Certainly, after that, but for the idea I attached to them, I should have preferred giving my birds other names; and, you must know, there is one name which I adore, — it is Colibri.[1] I did not change, because I never will call those birds by any other name than Crétu and Ramonette; if I did, I should seem to make a sacrifice, that I forgot my good, adopted parents, — don't you think so, M. Rodolph?"

"You are right a thousand times over. And Germain did not turn these names into a jest, eh?"

"On the contrary, the first time he heard them he thought them droll, like every one else, and that was natural enough. But when I explained to him my reasons, as I had many times explained them to M. Cabrion, tears started to his eyes. From that time I said to myself, M. Germain is very kind-hearted, and there is nothing to be said against him, but his weeping so. And so, you see, M. Rodolph, my reproaching him with his sadness has made me unhappy now. Then I could not understand why any one was melancholy, but now I understand it but too well. But now my packet is completed, and my work is ready for delivery. Will you hand me my shawl, neighbour? It is not cold enough to take a cloak, is it?"

"We shall go and return in a coach."

"True; we shall go and return very quickly, and that will be so much gained."

"But, now I think of it, what are you to do? Your work will suffer from your visits to the prison."

"Oh, no, no; I have made my calculations. In the first place, I have my Sundays to myself, so I shall go and see Louise and Germain on those days; that will serve me for a walk and a change. Then, in the week, I shall go again to the prison once or twice. Each time will occupy me three good hours, won't it? Well, to

[1] Colibri is a celebrated chanson of Béranger, the especial poet of grisettes. — *English Translator.*

manage this comfortably, I shall work an hour more every day, and go to bed at twelve o'clock instead of eleven o'clock; that will be a clear gain of seven or eight hours a week, which I can employ in going to see Louise and Germain. You see I am richer than I appear," added Rigolette, with a smile.

"And you have no fear that you will be over-fatigued?"

"Bah! Not at all; I shall manage it. And, besides, it can't last for ever."

"Here is your shawl, neighbour."

"Fasten it; and mind you don't prick me."

"Ah, the pin is bent."

"Well, then, clumsy, take another then, — from the pincushion. Ah, I forgot! Will you do me a great favour, neighbour?"

"Command me, neighbour."

"Mend me a good pen, with a broad nib, so that when I return I may write to poor Germain, and tell him I have executed all his commissions. He will have my letter to-morrow morning in the prison, and that will give him pleasure."

"Where are your pens?"

"There, — on the table; the knife is in the drawer. Wait until I light my taper, for it begins to grow dusk."

"Yes, I shall see better how to mend the pen."

"And I how to tie my cap."

Rigolette lighted a lucifer-match, and lighted a wax-end in a small bright candlestick.

"The deuce, — a wax-light! Why, neighbour, what extravagance!"

"Oh, what I burn costs but a very small trifle more than a candle, and it's so much cleaner!"

"Not much dearer?"

"Indeed, they are not! I buy these wax-ends by the pound, and a half a pound lasts nearly a year."

"But," said Rodolph, who was mending the pen very

carefully, whilst the grisette was tying on her cap before the glass, "I do not see any preparations for your dinner."

"I have not the least appetite. I took a cup of milk this morning, and I shall take another this evening, with a small piece of bread, and that will be enough for me."

"Then you will not take a dinner with me quietly after we have been to Germain's?"

"Thank you, neighbour; but I am not in spirits,— my heart is too heavy,— another time with pleasure. But the evening when poor Germain leaves his prison, I invite myself, and afterwards you shall take me to the theatre. Is that a bargain?"

"It is, neighbour; and I assure you I will not forget the engagement. But you refuse me this to-day?"

"Yes, M. Rodolph. I should be a very dull companion, without saying a word about the time it would occupy me; for, you see, at this moment, I really cannot afford to be idle, or waste one single quarter of an hour."

"Then, for to-day I renounce the pleasure."

"There is my parcel, neighbour. Now go out first, and I will lock the door."

"Here's a capital pen for you; and now for the parcel."

"Mind you don't rumple it; it is *pout-de-soie*, and soon creases. Hold it in your hand,— carefully,— there, in that way; that's it. Now go, and I will show you a light."

And Rodolph descended the staircase, followed by Rigolette.

At the moment when the two neighbours were passing by the door of the porter's lodge they saw M. Pipelet, who, with his arms hanging down, was advancing towards them from the bottom of the passage, holding in one hand the sign which announced his Partnership of Friendship with Cabrion, and in the other the portrait of the con-

founded painter. Alfred's despair was so overwhelming that his chin touched his breast, so that the wide crown of his bell-shaped hat was easily seen. Seeing him thus, with his head lowered, coming towards Rodolph and Rigolette, he might have been compared to a ram, or a brave Breton, preparing for combat.

Anastasie soon appeared on the threshold of the lodge, and exclaimed, at her husband's appearance:

"Well, dearest old boy, here you are! And what did the commissary say to you? Alfred, Alfred, mind what you're doing, or you'll poke your head against my king of lodgers. Excuse him, M. Rodolph. It is that vagabond of a Cabrion, who uses him worse and worse. He'll certainly turn my dear old darling into a donkey! Alfred, love, speak to me!"

At this voice, so dear to his heart, M. Pipelet raised his head. His features were impressed with a bitter agony.

"What did the commissary say to you?" inquired Anastasie.

"Anastasie, we must collect the few things we possess, embrace our friends, pack up our trunk, and expatriate ourselves from Paris, — from France, — from my beautiful France; for now, assured of impunity, the monster is capable of pursuing me everywhere, throughout the length and breadth of the departments of the kingdom."

"What, the commissary?"

"The commissary," exclaimed M. Pipelet, with fierce indignation, — "the commissary laughed in my teeth!"

"At you, — a man of mature age, with an air so respectable that you would appear as silly as a goose if one did not know your virtues?"

"Well, notwithstanding that, when I had respectfully deposed in his presence my mass of complaints and vexations against that infernal Cabrion, the magistrate, after having looked and laughed — yes, laughed, and, I may add, laughed indecorously — at the sign and the portrait

which I brought with me as corroborative testimony, — the magistrate replied, ' My good fellow, this Cabrion is a wag, — a practical joker. But pay no attention to his pleasantries. I advise you to laugh at him, and heartily, too, for really there is ample cause to do so.' ' To laugh at it, sir-r-r!' I exclaimed, — ' to laugh at it, when grief consumes me, — when this scamp poisons my very existence; he placards me, and will drive me out of my wits. I demand that they imprison, exile the monster, — at least from my street!' At these words the commissary smiled, and politely pointed to the door. I understood the magistrate, sighed, and — and — here I am!"

" Good-for-nothing magistrate!" exclaimed Madame Pipelet.

"It is all over, Anastasie, — all is ended, — hope ceases. There's no justice in France; I am really atrociously sacrificed."

And, by way of peroration, M. Pipelet dashed the sign and portrait to the farther end of the passage with all his force. Rodolph and Rigolette had in the shade smiled at M. Pipelet's despair. After having said a few words of consolation to Alfred, whom Anastasie was trying to calm as well as she could, the king of lodgers left the house in the Rue du Temple with Rigolette, and they both got into a coach to go to François Germain's.

CHAPTER II.

THE WILL.

François Germain resided No. 11 Boulevard St. Denis. It may not be amiss to recall to the reader, who has probably forgotten the circumstance, that Madame Mathieu, the diamond-matcher, whose name has been already mentioned as the person for whom Morel the lapidary worked, lodged in the same house as Germain. During the long ride from the Rue du Temple to the Rue St. Honoré, where dwelt the dressmaker for whom Rigolette worked, Rodolph had ample opportunities of more fully appreciating the fine natural disposition of his companion. Like all instinctively noble and devoted characters, she appeared utterly unconscious of the delicacy and generosity of her conduct, all she said and did seeming to her as the most simple and matter-of-course thing possible.

Nothing would have been more easy than for Rodolph to provide liberally both for Rigolette's present and future wants, and thus to have enabled her to carry her consoling attentions to Louise and Germain, without grieving over the loss of that time which was necessarily taken from her work, — her sole dependence; but the prince was unwilling to diminish the value of the grisette's devotion by removing all the difficulties, and, although firmly resolved to bestow a rich reward on the rare and beautiful qualities he hourly discovered in her, he determined to follow her to the termination of this new and interesting trial. It is scarcely necessary to say that, had the health of the young girl appeared to

suffer in the smallest degree from the increase of labour she so courageously imposed on herself, in order to dedicate a portion of each week to the unhappy daughter of the lapidary and the son of the Schoolmaster, Rodolph would instantaneously have stepped forward to her aid; and he continued to study with equal pleasure and emotion the workings of a nature so naturally disposed to view everything on its sunny side, so full of internal happiness, and so little accustomed to sorrow that occasionally she would smile, and seem the mirthful creature nature had made her, spite of all the grief by which she was surrounded.

At the end of about an hour, the *fiacre*, returning from the Rue St. Honoré, stopped before a modest, unpretending sort of house, situated No. 11 Boulevard St. Denis. Rodolph assisted Rigolette to alight. The young sempstress then proceeded to the porter's lodge, where she communicated Germain's intentions, without forgetting the promised gratuity.

Owing to the extreme amenity of his disposition, the son of the Schoolmaster was unusually beloved, and the *confrère* of M. Pipelet was deeply grieved to learn that so quiet and well-conducted a lodger was about to quit the house, and to that purpose the worthy porter warmly expressed himself. Having obtained a light, Rigolette proceeded to rejoin her companion, having first arranged with the porter that he should not follow her up-stairs till a time she indicated should have elapsed, and then merely to receive his final orders. The chamber occupied by Germain was situated on the fourth floor. When they reached the door, Rigolette handed the key to Rodolph, saying:

"Here, will you open the door? My hand trembles so violently, I cannot do it. I fear you will laugh at me. But, when I think that poor Germain will never more enter this room, I seem as though I were about to pass the threshold of a chamber of death."

"Come, come, my good neighbour, try and exert yourself; you must not indulge such thoughts as these."

"I know it is wrong; but, indeed, I cannot help it." And here Rigolette tried to dry up the tears with which her eyes were filled.

Without being equally affected as his companion, Rodolph still experienced a deep and painful emotion as he penetrated into this humble abode. Well aware of the detestable pertinacity with which the accomplices of the Schoolmaster pursued, and were possibly still pursuing, Germain, he pictured to himself the many hours the unfortunate youth was constrained to pass in this cheerless solitude. Rigolette placed the light on the table. Nothing could possibly be more simple than the fittings-up of the apartment itself. Its sole furniture consisted of a small bed, a chest of drawers, a walnut-tree bureau, four rush-bottomed chairs, and a table; white calico curtains hung from the windows and around the bed. The only ornament the mantelpiece presented was a water-bottle and glass. The bed was made; but, by the impression left on it, it would seem that Germain had thrown himself on it without undressing on the night previous to his arrest.

"Poor fellow!" said Rigolette, sadly, as she examined each minute detail of the interior of the apartment; "it is very easy to see I was not near him. His room is tidy, to be sure, but not as neat as it ought to be. Everything is covered with dust. The curtains are smoke-dried, the windows want cleaning, and the floor is not kept as it should be. Oh, dear, what a difference! The Rue du Temple was not a better room, but it had a much more cheerful look, because everything was kept so bright and clean, — like in my apartment!"

"Because in the Rue du Temple he had the benefit of your advice and assistance."

"Oh, pray look here!" cried Rigolette, pointing to the bed. "Only see, — the poor fellow never went

to bed at all the last night he was here! How uneasy he must have been! See, he has left his handkerchief on his pillow, quite wet with his tears! I can see that plainly enough." Then, taking up the handkerchief, she added, "Germain has kept a small, orange-coloured silk cravat I gave him once during our happy days. I have a great mind to keep this handkerchief in remembrance of his misfortune. Do you think he would be angry?"

"On the contrary, he would but be too much delighted with such a mark of your affection."

"Ah, but we must not indulge in such thoughts now; let us attend to more serious matters. I will make up a parcel of linen from the contents of those drawers, ready to take to the prison, and Mother Bouvard, whom I will send to-morrow, will see to the rest; but first of all I will open the bureau, in order to get out the papers and money Germain wished me to take charge of."

"But, now I think of it, Louise Morel gave me back yesterday the thirteen hundred francs in gold she received from Germain, to pay the lapidary's debt, which I had already discharged. I have this money about me; it justly belongs to Germain, since he repaid the notary what he withdrew from the cash-box. I will place it in your hands, in order that you may add it to the sum entrusted to your care."

"Just as you like, M. Rodolph, although really I should prefer not having so large a sum in my possession, really there are so many dishonest people nowadays! As for papers, that's quite another thing; I'll willingly take charge of as many papers as you please, but money is such a dangerous thing!"

"Perhaps you are right; then I tell you what we will do — eh, neighbour? I will be banker, and undertake the responsibility of guarding this money. Should Germain require anything, you can let me know; I will leave you my address, and whatever you send for shall be punctually and faithfully sent."

"Oh, dear, yes, that will be very much better! How good of you to offer, for I could not have ventured to propose such a thing to you! So that is settled; I will beg of you, also, to take whatever this furniture sells for. And now let us see about the papers," continued Rigolette, opening the bureau and pulling out several drawers. "Ah, I dare say this is it! See what a large packet! But, oh, good gracious, M. Rodolph, do pray look what mournful words these are written on the outside!"

And here Rigolette, in a faltering voice, read as follows:

"'In the event of my dying by either a violent or natural death, I request whoever may open this bureau to carry these papers to Mlle. Rigolette, dressmaker, No. 17 Rue du Temple.' Do you think, M. Rodolph, that I may break the seals of the envelope?"

"Undoubtedly; does not Germain expressly say that among the papers you will find a letter particularly addressed to yourself?"

The agitated girl broke the seals which secured the outward cover, and from it fell a quantity of papers, one of which, bearing the superscription of Mlle. Rigolette, contained these words:

"MADEMOISELLE:— When this letter reaches your hands, I shall be no more, if, as I fear, I should perish by a violent death, through falling into a snare similar to that from which I lately escaped. A few particulars herein enclosed, and entitled 'Notes on My Life,' may serve to discover my murderers."

"Ah, M. Rodolph," cried Rigolette, interrupting herself, "I am no longer astonished poor Germain was so melancholy! How very dreadful to be continually pursued by such ideas!"

"He must, indeed, have suffered deeply; but, trust me, his worst misfortunes are over."

"Alas, M. Rodolph, I trust it may prove so! Still, to be in prison, and accused of theft!"

"Make yourself quite easy about him; his innocence once proved, instead of returning to his former seclusion and loneliness, he will regain his friends. You, first and foremost, and then a dearly loved mother, from whom he has been separated from his childhood."

"His mother! Has he, then, still a mother?"

"He has, but she has long believed him lost to her for ever. Imagine her delight at seeing him again, cleared from the unworthy charge now brought against him. You see I was right in saying that his greatest troubles were over; do not mention his mother to him. I entrust you with the secret, because you take so generous an interest in the fate of Germain that it is but due to your devotedness that you should be tranquillised as to his future fate."

"Oh, thank you, M. Rodolph! I promise you to guard the secret as carefully as you could do."

Rigolette then proceeded with the perusal of Germain's letter; it continued thus:

"'Should you deign, mademoiselle, to cast your eyes over these notes, you will find that I have been unfortunate all my life, always unhappy, except during the hours I have passed with you; you will find sentiments I should never have ventured to express by words fully revealed in a sort of memorandum, entitled "My Only Days of Happiness." Nearly every evening, after quitting you, I thus poured forth the cheering thoughts with which your affection inspired me, and which only sweetened the bitterness of a cup full even to overflowing. That which was but friendship in you, was, in my breast, the purest, the sincerest love; but of that love I have never spoken. No, I reserved its full disclosure till the moment should arrive when I could be but as an object of your sorrowing recollection. No, never would I have sought to involve you in a destiny as thoroughly miserable as my own. But, when your eye peruses these pages, there will be nothing to fear from the power of my ill-starred fate. I shall have been your faithful friend, your adoring lover, but I shall no longer be dangerous to your future happiness in either sense. I have but

one last wish and desire, and I trust that you will kindly accomplish it. I have witnessed the noble courage with which you labour day by day, as well as the care and management requisite to make your hard-earned gain suffice for your moderate wants. Often have I shuddered at the bare idea of your being reduced by illness (brought on, probably, by overattention to your work) to a state too frightful to dwell upon. And it is no small consolation to me to believe it in my power to spare you, not only a considerable share of personal inconvenience, but also to preserve you from evils your unsuspicious nature dreams not of.'

"What does that last part mean, M. Rodolph?" asked Rigolette, much surprised.

"Proceed with the letter; we shall see by and by."

Rigolette thus resumed:

"'I know upon how little you can live, and of what service even a small sum would be to you in any case of emergency. I am very poor myself, but still, by dint of rigid economy, I have managed to save fifteen hundred francs, which are placed in the hands of a banker; it is all I am worth in the world, but by my will, which you will find with this, I have ventured to bequeath it to you; and I trust you will not refuse to accept this last proof of the sincere affection of a friend and brother, from whom death will have separated you when this meets your eye.'

"Oh, M. Rodolph," cried Rigolette, bursting into tears, "this is too much! Kind, good Germain, thus to consider my future welfare! What an excellent heart he must have!"

"Worthy and noble-minded young man!" rejoined Rodolph, with deep emotion. "But calm yourself, my good girl. Thank God, Germain is still living! And, by anticipating the perusal of his last wishes, you will at least have learned how sincerely he loved you, — nay, still loves you!"

"And only to think," said Rigolette, drying up her tears, "that I should never once have suspected it! When first I knew M. Girandeau and M. Cabrion, they were always talking to me of their violent love, and

flames, and darts, and such stuff; but finding I took no notice of them, they left off wearying me with such nonsense. Now, on the contrary, Germain never named love to me. When I proposed to him that we should be good friends, he accepted the offer as frankly as it was made, and ever after that we were always excellent companions and neighbours; but — now I don't mind telling you, M. Rodolph, that I was not sorry Germain never talked to me in the same silly strain."

"But still it astonished you, did it not?"

"Why, M. Rodolph, I ascribed it to his melancholy, and I fancied his low spirits prevented his joking like the others."

"And you felt angry with him, did you not, for always being so sad?"

"No," said the grisette, ingenuously; "no, I excused him, because it was the only fault he had. But now that I have read his kind and feeling letter, I cannot forgive myself for ever having blamed him even for that one thing."

"In the first place," said Rodolph, smiling, "you find that he had many and just causes for his sadness; and secondly, that, spite of his melancholy, he did love you deeply and sincerely."

"To be sure; and it seems a thing to be proud of, to be loved by so excellent a young man!"

"Whose love you will, no doubt, return one of these days?"

"I don't know about that, M. Rodolph, though it is very likely, for poor Germain is so much to be pitied. I can imagine myself in his place. Suppose, just when I fancied myself despised and forsaken by all the world, some one whom I loved very dearly should evince for me more regard than I had ventured to hope for, don't you think it would make me very happy?" Then, after a short silence, Rigolette continued, with a sigh, "On the other hand, we are both so poor that, perhaps, it would

be very imprudent. Ah, well, M. Rodolph, I must not think of such things. Perhaps, too, I deceive myself. One thing, however, is quite sure, and that is, that so long as Germain remains in prison I will do all in my power for him. It will be time enough when he has regained his liberty for me to determine whether 'tis love or friendship I feel for him. Until then it would only torment me needlessly to try to make up my mind what I had better do. But it is getting late, M. Rodolph. Will you have the goodness to collect all those papers, while I make up a parcel of linen? Ah, I forgot the little bag containing the little orange-coloured cravat I gave him. No doubt it is here — in this drawer. Oh, yes, this is it. Oh, see, what a pretty bag! How nicely embroidered! Poor Germain! I declare he has kept such a trifle as this little handkerchief with as much care as though it had been some holy relic. I well remember the last time I had it around my throat; and when I gave it to him, poor fellow, how very pleased he was!"

At this moment some one knocked at the door.

"Who's there?" inquired Rodolph.

"Want to speak to Ma'am Mathieu," replied a harsh, hoarse voice, and in a tone which is peculiar to the lowest orders. (Madame Mathieu was the matcher of precious stones to whom we have before referred.)

This voice, whose accent was peculiar, awoke some vague recollections in Rodolph's breast; and, desirous of elucidating them, he took the light, and went himself to open the door. He found himself confronted by a man who was one of the frequenters of the *tapis-franc* of the ogress, and recognised him instantly, so deeply was the print of vice stamped upon him, so completely marked on his beardless and youthful features. It was Barbillon.

Barbillon, the pretended hackney-coachman, who had driven the Schoolmaster and the Chouette to the hollow way of Bouqueval, — Barbillon, the assassin of the

husband of the unhappy milkwoman, who had set the labourers of the farm at Arnouville on against La Goualeuse. Whether this wretch had forgotten Rodolph's face, which he had never seen but once at the *tapis-franc* of the ogress, or that the change of dress prevented him from recognising the Chourineur's conqueror, he did not evince the slightest surprise at his appearance.

"What do you want?" inquired Rodolph.

"Here's a letter for Ma'am Mathieu, and I must give it to her myself," was Barbillon's reply.

"She does not live here,— it's opposite," said Rodolph.

"Thank ye, master. They told me the left-hand door; but I've mistook."

Rodolph did not recollect the name of the diamond-matcher, which Morel the lapidary had only mentioned once or twice, and thus had no motive for interesting himself in the female to whom Barbillon came with his message; but yet, although ignorant of the ruffian's crimes, his face was so decidedly repulsive that he remained at the threshold of the door, curious to see the person to whom Barbillon brought the letter.

Barbillon had scarcely knocked at the door opposite to Germain's, than it opened, and the jewel-matcher, a stout woman of about fifty, appeared with a candle in her hand.

"Ma'am Mathieu?" inquired Barbillon.

"That's me, my man."

"Here's a letter, and I waits for an answer."

And Barbillon made a step forward to enter the doorway, but the woman made him a sign to remain where he was, and unsealed the letter, which she read by the light of the candle she held, and then replied with an air of satisfaction:

"Say it's all right, my man, and I will bring what is required. I will be there at the same hour as usual. My respects to the lady."

"Yes, missus. Please to remember the porter!"

"Oh, you must ask them as sent you; they are richer than I am." And she shut the door.

Rodolph returned to Germain's room, when he saw Barbillon run quickly down the staircase. The ruffian found on the boulevard a man of low-lived, brutal appearance, waiting for him in front of a shop. Although the passers-by could hear (it is true they could not comprehend), Barbillon appeared so delighted that he could not help saying to his companion:

"Come and 'lush a drain of red tape,' Nicholas; the old mot swallows the bait, hook and all. She'll show at the Chouette's. Old Mother Martial will lend a hand to peel her of the swag, and a'terwards we can box the 'cold meat' in your 'barkey.'" [1]

"Let's mizzle,[2] then; for I must get back to Asnières early, or else my brother Martial will smell summut."

And the two robbers, after having exchanged these words in their own slang, went towards the Rue St. Denis.

Some minutes afterwards Rigolette and Rodolph left Germain's, got into the hackney-coach, and reached the Rue du Temple.

The coach stopped.

At the moment when the door opened, Rodolph recognised by the light of the dram-shop lamps his faithful Murphy, who was waiting for him at the door of the entrance.

The squire's presence always announced some serious and sudden event, for it was he alone who knew at all times where to find the prince.

"What's the matter?" inquired Rodolph, quickly,

[1] "Come and let's have some brandy together, Nicholas. The old woman falls easily into the snare. She will come to the Chouette's; Mother Martial will help us to take her jewels from her forcibly, and then we can remove the dead body away in your boat."

[2] "Let's be quick, then."

whilst Rigolette was collecting several things out of the vehicle.

"A terrible circumstance, monseigneur!"

"Speak, in heaven's name!"

"M. the Marquis d'Harville —"

"You alarm me!"

"Had several friends to breakfast with him this morning. He was in high spirits, had never been more joyous, when a fatal imprudence —"

"Pray come to the point — pray!"

"And playing with a pistol, which he did not believe to be loaded —"

"Wounded himself seriously."

"Monseigneur!"

"Well?"

"Something dreadful!"

"What do you mean?"

"He is dead!"

"D'Harville! Ah, how horrible!" exclaimed Rodolph, in a tone so agonised that Rigolette, who was at the moment quitting the coach with the parcels, said:

"Alas! what ails you, M. Rodolph?"

"Some very distressing information I have just told my friend, mademoiselle," said Murphy to the young girl, for the prince was so overcome that he could not reply.

"Is it, then, some dreadful misfortune?" said Rigolette, trembling all over.

"Very dreadful, indeed!" replied the squire.

"Yes, most awful!" said Rodolph, after a few moment's silence; then recollecting Rigolette, he said to her, "Excuse me, my dear neighbour, if I do not go up to your room with you. To-morrow I will send you my address, and an order to go to see Germain in his prison. I will soon see you again."

"Ah, M. Rodolph, I assure you that I share in the grief you now experience! I thank you very much for

having accompanied me; but I shall soon see you again, sha'n't I?"

"Yes, my child, very soon."

"Good evening, M. Rodolph," added Rigolette, and then disappeared down the passage with the various things she had brought away from Germain's room.

The prince and Murphy got into the hackney-coach, which took them to the Rue Plumet. Rodolph immediately wrote the following note to Clémence:

"MADAME:—I have this instant learned the sudden blow which has struck you, and deprived me of one of my best friends. I forbear any attempt to portray my horror and my regret. Yet I must mention to you certain circumstances unconnected with this cruel event. I have just learned that your stepmother, who has been, no doubt, in Paris for several days, returns this evening to Normandy, taking with her Polidori. No doubt but this fact will convince you of the peril which threatens your father; and pray allow me to give you some advice, which I think requisite. After the appalling event of this morning, every one must but too easily conceive your anxiety to quit Paris for some time; go, therefore, go at once, to Aubiers, so that you may arrive there before your stepmother, or, at least, as soon as she. Make yourself easy, madame, for I shall watch at a distance, as well as close, the abominable projects of your stepmother. Adieu, madame; I write these few lines to you in great haste. My heart is lacerated when I remember yesterday evening, when I left him,—him,—more tranquil and more happy than he had been for a very long time.

"Believe, madame, in my deep and lasting devotion,

"RODOLPH."

Following the prince's advice, three hours after she had received this letter, Madame d'Harville, accompanied by her daughter, was on the road to Normandy. A post-chaise, despatched from Rodolph's mansion, followed in the same route. Unfortunately, in the troubled state into which this complication of events and the hurry of her departure had driven her, Clémence had forgotten to inform the prince that she had met Fleur-de-Marie at St. Lazare.

Our readers may, perhaps, remember that, on the previous evening, the Chouette had been menacing Madame Séraphin, and threatening to unfold the whole history of La Goualeuse's existence, affirming that she knew (and she spoke truth) where the young girl then was. The reader may also recollect that, after this conversation, the notary, Jacques Ferrand, dreading the disclosure of his criminal course, believed that he had a strong motive for effecting the disappearance of La Goualeuse, whose existence, once known, would compromise him fatally. He had, in consequence, written to Bradamanti, one of his accomplices, to come to him that they might together arrange a fresh plot, of which Fleur-de-Marie was to be the victim. Bradamanti, occupied by the no less pressing interests of Madame d'Harville's stepmother, who had her own sinister motives for taking the charlatan with her to M. d'Orbigny, finding it, no doubt, more profitable to serve his ancient female ally, did not attend to the notary's appointment, but set out for Normandy without seeing Madame Séraphin.

The storm was gathering over the head of Jacques Ferrand. During the day the Chouette had returned to reiterate her threats; and to prove that they were not vain, she declared to the notary that the little girl, formerly abandoned by Madame Séraphin, was then a prisoner in St. Lazare, under the name of La Goualeuse; and that if he did not give ten thousand francs (400*l.*) in three days, this young girl would receive the papers which belonged to her, and which would instruct her that she had been confided in her infancy to the care of Jacques Ferrand. According to his custom, the notary denied all boldly, and drove the Chouette away as an impudent liar, although he was perfectly convinced, and greatly alarmed at the dangerous drift of her threats. Thanks to his numerous connections, the notary found means to ascertain that very day (during the conversation of Fleur-de-Marie and Madame d'Harville) that La

Goualeuse was actually a prisoner in St. Lazare, and so marked for her good conduct that they were expecting her discharge every moment. Thus informed, Jacques Ferrand, having determined on his deadly scheme, felt that, in order to carry it into execution, Bradamanti's help was more than ever indispensable; and thereon came Madame Séraphin's vain attempts to see the doctor. Having at length heard, in the evening, of the departure of the charlatan, the notary, driven to act by the imminence of his fears and danger, recalled to mind the Martial family, those freshwater pirates established near the bridge of Asnières, with whom Bradamanti had proposed to place Louise, in order to get rid of her undetected. Having absolutely need of an accomplice to carry out his deadly purposes against Fleur-de-Marie, the notary took every precaution not to be compromised in case a fresh crime should be committed; and, the day after Bradamanti's departure for Normandy, Madame Séraphin went with all speed to the Martials.

CHAPTER III.

L'ILE DU RAVAGEUR.

The following scenes took place during the evening of the day in which Madame Séraphin, in compliance with Jacques Ferrand the notary's orders, went to the Martials, the freshwater pirates established at the point of a small islet of the Seine, not far from the bridge of Asnières.

The Father Martial had died, like his own father, on the scaffold, leaving a widow, four sons, and two daughters. The second of these sons was already condemned to the galleys for life, and of the rest of this numerous family there remained in the Ile du Ravageur (a name which was popularly given to this place; why, we will hereafter explain) the Mother Martial; three sons, the eldest (La Louve's lover) twenty-five years of age, the next twenty, and the youngest twelve; two girls, one eighteen years of age, the second nine.

The examples of such families, in whom there is perpetuated a sort of fearful inheritance of crime, are but too frequent. And this must be so. Let us repeat, unceasingly, society thinks of punishing, but never of preventing, crime. A criminal is sentenced to the galleys for life; another is executed. These felons will leave young families; does society take any care or heed of these orphans, — these orphans, whom it has made so, by visiting their father with a civil death, or cutting off his head? Does it substitute any careful or preserving guardianship after the removal of him

whom the law has declared to be unworthy, infamous, — after the removal of him whom the law has put to death? No; "the poison dies with the beast," says society. It is deceived; the poison of corruption is so subtle, so corrosive, so contagious, that it becomes almost invariably hereditary; but, if counteracted in time, it would never be incurable. Strange contradiction! Dissection proves that a man dies of a malady that may be transmitted, and then, by precautionary measures, his descendants are preserved from the affection of which he has been the victim. Let the same facts be produced in the moral order of things; let it be demonstrated that a criminal almost always bequeaths to his son the germ of a precocious depravity. Will society do for the safety of this young soul what the doctor does for the body, when it is a question of contending against hereditary vitiation? No; instead of curing this unhappy creature, we leave him to be gangrened, even to death; and then, in the same way as the people believe the son of the executioner to be an executioner, perforce, also, they will believe the son of a criminal also a criminal. And then we consider that the result of an inheritance inexorably fatal, which is really a corruption caused by the egotistical neglect of society. Thus, if, in spite of the evil mark on his name, the orphan, whom the law has made so, remains, by chance, industrious and honest, a barbarous prejudice will still reflect on him his father's offences; and thus subjected to undeserved reprobation, he will scarcely find employment. And, instead of coming to his aid, to save him from discouragement, despair, and, above all, the dangerous resentments of injustice, which sometimes drive the most generous disposition to revolt to ill, society will say:

"Let him go wrong if he will, — we shall watch him. Have we not gaolers, turnkeys, and executioners?"

Thus for him who (and it is as rare as it is meritori-

ous) preserves himself pure in spite of the worst examples, is there any support, any encouragement? Thus for him who, plunged from his birth in a focus of domestic depravity, is vitiated quite young, what hope is there of cure?

"Yes, yes, I will cure him, the orphan I have made," replies society; "but in my own way, — by and by. To extirpate the smallpox, to cut out the imposthume, it must come to a head."

A criminal desires to speak.

"Prisons and galleys, they are my hospitals. In incurable cases there is the executioner. As to the cure of my orphan," adds society, "I will reflect upon it. Let the germ of hereditary corruption ripen; let it increase; let it extend its ravages far and wide. When our man shall be rotten to the heart, when crime oozes out of him at every pore, when a robbery or desperate murder shall have placed him at the same bar of infamy at which his father stood, then we will cure this inheritor of crime, — as we cured his progenitor. At the galleys or on the scaffold the son will find his father's seat still warm."

Society thus reasons; and it is astonished, and indignant, and frightened, to see how robberies and murders are handed down so fatally from generation to generation.

The dark picture which is now to follow — The Freshwater Pirates — is intended to display what the inheritance of evil in a family may be when society does not come legally or officially to preserve the unfortunate victims of the law from the terrible consequences of the sentence executed against the father.[1]

[1] In proportion as we advance in this work, its moral aim is attacked with so much bitterness, and, as we think, with so much injustice, that we ask permission to dwell a little on the serious and honourable idea which hitherto has sustained and guided us. Many serious, delicate, and lofty minds, being desirous of encouraging us in our endeavours, and having forwarded to us the flattering testimonials of their approval, it is due, perhaps, to these known and unknown friends to reply over again to the blind accusations which have reached, we may say, even to the bosom of the legislative assembly. To proclaim the odious immorality of our work is to proclaim

The ancestor of the Martial family who first established himself on this islet, on payment of a moderate rent, was a *ravageur* (a river-scavenger). The *ravageurs*, as well as the *débardeurs* and *déchireurs* of boats, remain nearly the whole of the day plunged in water up to the waist in the exercise of their trade. The *débardeurs* bring ashore the floating wood. The *déchireurs* break up the rafts which have brought the wood. Equally aquatic as these other two occupations, the business of a *ravageur* is different. Going into the water as far as possible, the *ravageur*, or mud-lark, draws up, by aid of a long drag, the river sand from beneath the mud; then, collecting it in large wooden bowls, he washes it like a person washing for gold dust, and extracts from it metallic particles of all kinds, — iron, copper, lead, tin, pewter, brass, — the results of the relics of all sorts of utensils. The *ravageurs*, indeed, often find in the sand fragments of gold and silver jewelry, brought into the Seine

decidedly, it appears to us, the odiously immoral tendencies of the persons who honour us with the deepest sympathies. It is in the name of these sympathies, as well as in our own, that we shall endeavour to prove, by an example selected from amongst others, that this work is not altogether destitute of generous and practical ideas. We gave, some time back, the sketch of a model farm founded by Rodolph, in order to encourage, teach, and remunerate poor, honest, and industrious labourers. We add to this: Honest men who are unfortunate deserve, at least, as much interest as criminals; yet there are numerous associations intended for the patronage of young prisoners, or those discharged, but there is no society founded for the purpose of giving succour to poor young persons whose conduct has been invariably exemplary. So that it is absolutely necessary to have committed an offence to become qualified for these institutions, which are, unquestionably, most meritorious and salutary. And we make a peasant of the Bouqueval farm to say:

"It is humane and charitable not to make the wicked desperate, but it is also requisite that the good should not be without hope. If a stout, sturdy, honest fellow, desirous of doing well, and of learning all he can, were to present himself at the farm for young ex-thieves, they would say to him, 'My lad, haven't you stolen some trifle, or been somewhat dissolute?' 'No!' 'Well, then, this is no place for you.'"

This discordance of things had struck minds much superior to our own, and, thanks to them, what we considered as an utopianism was realised. Under the superintendence of one of the most distinguished and most honourable men of the age, M. le Comte Portalis, and under the able direction of a real philanthropist with a generous heart and an enlightened and practical mind, M. Allier, a society has been established for the purpose of succouring poor and honest persons of the Department of the Seine, and of employing them in agricultural colonies. This single and sole result is sufficient to affirm the moral idea of our work. We are very proud and very happy to have been met in the midst of our ideas, our wishes, and our hopes by the founders of this new work of charity; for we are one of the most obscure, but most convinced, propagators of these two great truths, — that it

either by the sewers which are washed by the stream, or by the masses of snow or ice collected in the streets, and which are cast into the river. We do not know by what tradition or custom these persons, usually honest and industrious, are called by a name so formidable. Martial, the father, the first inhabitant of this islet, being a *ravageur* (and a sad exception to his comrades), the inhabitants of the river's banks called it the Ile du Ravageur.

The dwelling of these freshwater pirates was placed at the southern end of the island. In daytime there was visible, on a sign-board over the door:

"AU RENDEZVOUS DES RAVAGEURS.
GOOD WINE, GOOD EELS, AND FRIED FISH.
BOATS LET BY THE DAY OR HOUR."

We thus see that the head of this depraved family added to his visible or hidden pursuits those of a public-

is the duty of society to prevent evil, and to encourage and recompense good, as much as in it lies.

Whilst we are speaking of this new work of charity, whose just and moral idea ought to have a salutary and fruitful result, let us hope that its founders will perchance think of supplying another vacancy, by extending hereafter their tutelary patronage, or, at least, their solicitude, over young children whose fathers have been executed, or condemned to an infamous sentence involving civil death, and who, we will repeat, are made orphans by the act and operation of the law. Such of these unfortunate children as shall be already worthy of interest from their wholesome tendencies and their misery will still more deserve particular notice, in consequence of their painful, difficult, and dangerous position. Let us add: The family of a condemned criminal, almost always victims of cruel repulses, apply in vain for labour, and are compelled, in order to escape universal reprobation, to fly from the spot where they have hitherto found work. Then, exasperated and enraged by injustice, already branded as criminals, for faults of which they are innocent, frequently at the end of all honourable resource, these unfortunates would sink and die of famine if they remained honest. If they have, on the other hand, already undergone an almost inevitable corruption, ought we not to try and rescue them whilst there is yet time? The presence of these orphans of the law in the midst of other children protected by the society of whom we have spoken, would be, moreover, a useful example to all. It would show that if the guilty is unfailingly punished, his family lose nothing, but rather gain in the esteem of the world, if by dint of courage and virtues they achieve the reëstablishing of a tarnished name. Shall we say that the legislature desires to render the chastisement still more terrible by virtually striking the criminal father in the fortune of his innocent son? That would be barbarous, immoral, irrational. Is it not, on the contrary, of the highest moral consequence to prove to the people that there is no hereditary succession of evil; that the original stain is not ineffaceable?

Let us venture to hope that these reflections will appear deserving of some attention from the new Society of Patronage. Unquestionably it is painful to think that the state never takes the initiative in these questions so vital and so deeply interesting to social organisation.

house keeper, fisherman, and letter of boats. The felon's widow continued to keep the house, and reprobates, vagrants, escaped convicts, wandering wild-beast showmen, and scamps of every description came there to pass Sundays and other days not marked with a red letter in the calendar, in parties of pleasure. Martial (La Louve's lover), the eldest son of the family, the least guilty of all the family, was a river poacher, and now and then, as a real champion, and for money paid, took the part of the weak against the strong. One of his brothers, Nicholas, the intended accomplice of Barbillon in the murder of the jewel-matcher, was in appearance a *ravageur*, but really a freshwater pirate in the Seine and its banks. François, the youngest son of the executed felon, rowed visitors who wished to go on the river in a boat. We have alluded to Ambroise Martial, condemned to the galleys for burglary at night with attempt to murder. The eldest daughter, nicknamed Calabash (*Calebasse*), helped her mother in the kitchen, and waited on the company. Her sister, Amandine, nine years of age, was also employed in the house according to her years and strength.

At the period in question it was a dull night out of doors; heavy, gray, opaque clouds, driven by the wind, showed here and there in the midst of their openings a few patches of dark blue spotted with stars. The outline of the islet, bordered by high and ragged poplars, was strongly and darkly defined in the clear haze of the sky and in the white transparency of the river. The house, with its irregular gables, was completely buried in the shade; two windows in the ground floor only were lighted, and these windows showed a deep red light, which was reflected like long trails of fire in the little ripples which washed the landing-place close to the house. The chains of the boats which were moored there made a continual clashing, that mingled unpleasantly with the gusts of the wind in the branches

of the poplars, and the hoarse murmurs of the main stream.

A portion of the family was assembled in the kitchen of the house. This was a large low-roofed apartment. Facing the door were two windows, under which a long stove extended. To the left hand there was a high chimney; on the right a staircase leading to the upper story. At the side of this staircase was the entrance to a large room, containing several tables for the use of the guests at the cabaret. The light of a lamp, joined to the flame of the fire, was strongly reflected by a number of saucepans and other copper utensils suspended against the wall, or ranged on shelves with a quantity of earthenware; and a large table stood in the middle of the kitchen. The felon's widow, with three of her children, was seated in the corner near the fireplace.

This woman, tall and meagre, seemed about five and forty years of age. She was dressed in black, with a mourning handkerchief tied about her head, concealing her hair, and surrounding her flat, livid, and wrinkled brows; her nose was long and straight; her cheek-bones prominent; her cheeks furrowed; her complexion bilious and sallow; the corners of her mouth, always curved downwards, rendered still harsher the expression of her countenance, as chilling, sinister, and immovable as a marble mask. Her gray eyebrows surmounted her dull blue eyes.

The felon's widow was employed with needlework, as well as her two daughters. The eldest girl was tall and forbidding like her mother, with her features, calm, harsh, and repulsive, her thin nose, her ill-formed mouth, and her pale look. Her yellow complexion, which resembled a ripe quince, had procured for her the name of Calabash (*Calebasse*). She was not in mourning, but wore a brown gown, whilst a cap of black tulle did not conceal two bands of scanty hair of dull and dingy light brown.

François, the youngest of the Martial sons, was sitting

on a low stool repairing an *aldrel*, a thin-meshed net forbidden to be used on the Seine. In spite of the tan of his features, this boy seemed in perfect health; a forest of red hair covered his head; his face was round, his lips thick, his forehead projecting, his eyes quick and piercing. He was not like his mother or his elder sister, but had a subdued and sly look, as from time to time, through the thick mass of hair that fell over his eyes, he threw a stealthy and fearful glance at his mother, or exchanged a look of intelligence and affection with his little sister, Amandine.

The latter was seated beside her brother, and was occupied, not in marking, but in unmarking, some linen stolen on the previous evening. She was nine years old, and was as like her brother as her sister was like her mother. Her features, without being more regular, were less coarse than those of François. Although covered with freckles, her complexion was remarkably clear, her lips thick and red, her hair also red, but silky, and her eyes, though small, were of a clear bright blue. When Amandine's look met that of her brother, she turned a glance towards the door, and then François replied by sigh; after which, calling his sister's attention by a slight gesture, he counted with the end of his needle ten loops of the net. This was meant to imply, in the symbolical language of children, that their brother Martial would not return until ten o'clock that evening.

Seeing these two women so silent and ill-looking, and the two poor little mute, frightened, uneasy children, we might suppose they were two executioners and two victims. Calabash, perceiving that Amandine had ceased from her occupation for a moment, said, in a harsh tone:

"Come, haven't you done taking the mark out of that shirt?"

The little girl bowed her head without making any reply, and, by the aid of her fingers and scissors, hastily

finished taking out the red cotton threads which marked the letters in the linen.

After a few minutes Amandine, addressing the widow timidly, showed her the shirt, and said:

"Mother, I have done it."

Without making any reply, the widow threw her another piece of linen. The child did not catch it quickly enough, and it fell on the ground. Her tall sister gave her, with her hand as hard as wood, a sharp slap on the arm, saying:

"You stupid brat!"

Amandine resumed her seat, and set to work actively, after having exchanged with her brother a glance of her eye, into which a tear had started.

The same silence continued to reign in the kitchen. Without, the wind still moaned and dashed about the sign in front of the house. This dismal creaking, and the dull boiling of a pot placed over the fire, were the only sounds that were heard. The two children observed, with secret fright, that their mother did not speak. Although she was habitually taciturn, this complete silence, and a certain drawing in of the lips, announced to them that the widow was in what they called her white passion, that is to say, was a prey to concentrated irritation.

The fire was going out for want of fuel.

"François, a log," said Calabash.

The young mender of forbidden nets looked into a nook beside the chimney, and replied:

"There are no more there."

"Then go to the wood-pile," said Calabash.

François murmured some unintelligible words, but did not stir.

"Do you hear me, François?" inquired Calabash, harshly.

The felon's widow laid on her knees a towel she was also unmarking, and looked at her son. He had lowered

his head, but he guessed he felt, if we may use the expression, the fierce look his mother cast upon him, and, fearful of encountering her dreaded countenance, the boy remained without stirring.

"I say, are you deaf, François?" said Calabash, in an irritated tone. "Mother, you see!"

The tall sister seemed to be happy in finding fault with the two children, and to seek for them the punishment which the widow pitilessly inflicted. Amandine, without being observed, gently touched her brother's elbow, to make him quietly do what Calabash desired. François did not stir. The elder sister still looked at her mother as demanding the punishment of the offender, and the widow understood her. With her long lean finger she pointed to a stick of stout and pliant willow placed in a recess near the chimney. Calabash stooped forward, took up this staff of chastisement, and handed it to her mother. François had seen his mother's gesture, and, rising suddenly, sprung out of the reach of the threatening stick.

"Do you want mother to break your back?" exclaimed Calabash.

The widow, still holding the willow stick in her hand, pinching her pale lips together more and more, looked at François with a fixed eye, but without uttering a syllable. By the slight tremor of Amandine's hands, with her head bent downwards, and the redness which suddenly overspread her neck, it was easy to see that the child, although habituated to such scenes, was alarmed at the fate that threatened her brother, who had taken refuge in a corner of the kitchen, and seemed frightened and irritated.

"Mind yourself, mother's going to begin, and then it will be too late!" said the tall sister.

"I don't care!" replied François, turning pale. "I'd rather be beaten as I was the day before yesterday, than — go to the wood-pile — and at night — again."

"And why?" asked Calabash, impatiently.

"I am — afraid of the wood-pile — I — " answered the boy, shuddering as he spoke.

"Afraid — you stupid! And of what?"

François shook his head, but did not reply.

"Will you answer? What are you afraid of?"

"I don't know. But I am frightened."

"Why, you've been there a hundred times, and last night, too."

"I won't go there any more."

"Mother's going to begin."

"So much the worse for me," exclaimed the lad. "But she may beat me, kill me, and I'll not go near the wood-pile — not at night."

"Once more — why not?" inquired Calabash.

"Why, because — "

"Because — ?"

"Because there's some one — "

"There's some one — "

"Buried there!" said François, with a shudder.

The felon's widow, in spite of her impassiveness, could not repress a sudden start; her daughter did the same. It seemed as though the two women were struck with an electric shock.

"Some one buried by the wood-pile?" said Calabash, shrugging her shoulders.

"I tell you that just now, whilst I was piling up some wood, I saw in a dark corner near the wood-pile a dead man's bone; it was sticking a little way out of the ground where it was damp, just by the corner," added François.

"Do you hear him, mother? Why, the boy's a fool!" said Calabash, making a signal to the widow. "They are mutton-bones I put there for washing-lye."

"It was not a mutton-bone," replied the boy, with alarm, "it was a dead person's bones, — a dead man's bones. I saw quite plainly a foot that stuck out of the ground."

"And, of course, you told your brother, your dear friend Martial, of your grand discovery, didn't you?" asked Calabash, with brutal irony.

François made no reply.

"Nasty little spy!" said Calabash, savagely; "because he is as cowardly as a cur, and would as soon see us scragged, as our father was scragged before us."

"If you call me a spy, I'll tell my brother Martial everything!" said François, much enraged. "I haven't told him yet, for I haven't seen him since; but, when he comes here this evening, I'll —"

The child could not finish; his mother came up to him, calm and inexorable as ever. Although she habitually stooped a little, her figure was still tall for a woman. Holding the willow wand in one hand, with the other the widow took her son by the arm, and, in spite of alarm, resistance, prayers, and tears of the child, she dragged him after her, and made him ascend the staircase at the further end of the kitchen. After a moment's interval, there was heard heavy trampling, mingled with cries and sobs. Some minutes afterwards this noise ceased. A door shut violently; the felon's widow descended. Then, as impassive as ever, she put the stick in its usual place, seated herself close to the fireplace, and resumed her occupation, without saying a word.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FRESHWATER PIRATE.

After a silence of several minutes, the criminal's widow said to her daughter:

"Go and get some wood; we will set the wood-pile to rights when Nicholas and Martial return home this evening."

"Martial! Do you mean to tell him also that—"

"The wood, I say!" repeated the widow, abruptly interrupting her daughter, who, accustomed to yield to the imperious and iron rule of her mother, lighted a lantern, and went out.

During the preceding scene, Amandine, deeply disquieted concerning the fate of François, whom she tenderly loved, had not ventured either to lift up her eyes, or dry her tears, which fell, drop by drop, on to her lap. Her sobs, which she dared not give utterance to, almost suffocated her, and she strove even to repress the fearful beatings of her heart. Blinded by her fast gathering tears, she sought to conceal her emotian by endeavouring to pick the mark from the chemise given to her, but, from the nervous trembling of her hand, she ran the scissors into her finger sufficiently deep to cause considerable effusion of blood; but the poor child thought much less of the pain she experienced than of the certain punishment which awaited her for staining the linen with her blood. Happily for her, the widow was too deeply absorbed in profound

reflection to take any notice of what had occurred. Calabash now returned, bearing a basket filled with wood. To the inquiring look of her mother, she returned an affirmative nod of the head, which was intended to acquaint her with the fact of the dead man's foot being actually above the ground. The widow compressed her lips, and continued the work she was occupied upon; the only difference perceptible in her being that she plied her needle with increased rapidity. Calabash, meanwhile, renewed the fire, superintended the state of the cookery progressing in the saucepan beside the hearth, and then resumed her seat near her mother.

"Nicholas is not here yet," said she to her parent. "It is to be hoped that the old woman who this morning engaged him to meet a gentleman from Bradamanti has not led him into any scrape. She had such a very off-hand way with her; she would neither give any explanation as to the nature of the business Nicholas was wanted for, nor tell her name, or where she came from."

The widow shrugged her shoulders.

"You do not consider Nicholas is in any danger, I see, mother. And, after all, I dare say you are quite right! The old woman desired him to be on the Quai de Billy, opposite the landing-place, about seven o'clock in the evening, and wait there for a person who wished to speak with him, and who would utter the word 'Bradamanti' as a sort of countersign. Certainly there is nothing very perilous in doing so much. No doubt Nicholas is late from having to-day found, as he did yesterday, something on the road. Look at this capital linen which he contrived to filch from a boat, in which a laundress had just left it!" So saying, she pointed to one of the pieces of linen Amandine was endeavouring to pick the mark out of. Then, addressing the child, she said, "What do folks mean when they talk of filching?"

"I believe," answered the frightened child, without venturing to look up, "it means taking things that are not ours."

"Oh, you little fool! It means stealing, not taking. Do you understand? — stealing!"

"Thank you, sister!"

"And when one can steal as cleverly as Nicholas, there is no need to want for anything. Look at that linen he filched yesterday; how comfortably it set us all up; and that, too, with no other trouble than just taking out the marks; isn't it true, mother?" added Calabash, with a burst of laughter, which displayed her decayed and irregular teeth, yellow and jaundiced as her complexion.

The widow received this pleasantry with cold indifference.

"Talking of fitting ourselves up without any expense," continued Calabash, "it strikes me we might possibly do so at another shop. You know quite well that an old man has come, within the last few days, to live in the country-house belonging to M. Griffon, the doctor of the hospital at Paris. I mean that lone house about a hundred steps from the river's side, just opposite the lime-kilns, — eh, mother? You understand me, don't you?"

The widow bowed her head, in token of assent.

"Well, Nicholas was saying yesterday that it was very likely a good job might be made out of it," pursued Calabash. "Now I have ascertained, this very morning, that there is good booty to be found there. The best way will be to send Amandine to watch the place a little; no one will take notice of a child like her; and she could pretend to be just playing about, and amusing herself; all the time she can take notice of everything, and will be able to tell us all she sees or hears. Do you hear what I say?" added Calabash, roughly addressing Amandine.

"Yes, sister," answered the trembling child; "I will be sure to do as you wish me."

"Yes, that is what you always say; but you never do more than promise, you little slink! That time that I desired you to take a five-franc piece out of the grocer's till at Asnières, while I managed to keep the man occupied at the other end of the shop, you did not choose to obey me; and yet you might have done it so easily; no one ever mistrusts a child. Pray what was your reason for not doing as you were bid?"

"Because, sister, my heart failed me, and I was afraid."

"And yet, the other day, you took a handkerchief out of the peddler's pack, when the man was selling his goods inside the public-house. Pray did he find it out, you silly thing?"

"Oh, but, sister, you know the handkerchief was for you, not me; and you made me do it. Besides, it was not money."

"What difference does that make?"

"Oh, why, taking a handkerchief is not half so wicked as stealing money!"

"Upon my word," said Calabash, contemptuously, "these are mighty fine notions! I suppose it is Martial stuffs your head with all this rubbish. I suppose you will run open-mouthed to tell him every word we have said, — eh, little spy? But Lord bless you! We are not afraid of you or Martial either; you can neither eat us nor drink us, that is one good thing." Then, addressing herself to the widow, Calabash continued, "I tell you what, mother, that fellow will get himself into no good by trying to rule, and domineer, and lay down the law here, as he does; both Nicholas and myself are determined not to submit to it. He sets both Amandine and François against everything either you or I order them to do. Do you think this can last much longer?"

"No!" said the mother, in a harsh, abrupt voice.

"Ever since his Louve has been sent to St. Lazare, Martial has gone on like a madman, savage as a bear with every one. Pray is it our fault? Can we help his sweetheart being put in prison? Only let her show her face here when she comes out, and I'll serve her in such a way she sha'n't forget one while! I'll match her! I'll — "

Here the widow, who had been buried in profound reflection, suddenly interrupted her daughter by saying:

"You think something profitable might be got out of the old fellow who lives in the doctor's house, do you not?"

"Yes, mother!"

"He looks poor and shabby as any common beggar!"

"And, for all that, he is a nobleman."

"A nobleman?"

"True as you're alive! And, what's more, he carries a purse full of gold, spite of his always going into Paris, and returning, on foot, leaning on an old stick, just for all the world like a poor wretch that had not a sou in the world."

"How do you know that he has gold?"

"A little while ago I was at the post-office at Asnières, to inquire whether there was any letter for us from Toulon — "

At these words, which recalled the circumstance of her son's confinement in the galleys, the brows of the widow were contracted with a dark frown, while a half repressed sigh escaped her lips. Unheeding these signs of perturbation, Calabash proceeded:

"I was waiting my turn, when the old man who lives at the doctor's house entered the office. I knew him again directly, by his white hair and beard, his dark complexion, and thick black eyebrows. He does not look like one that would be easily managed, I can tell you; and, spite of his age, he has the appearance of a deter-

mined old fool that would die sooner than yield. He walked straight up to the postmistress. 'Pray,' said he, 'have you any letters from Angers for M. le Comte de Remy?' 'Yes,' replied the woman, 'here is one.' 'Then it is for me,' said the old man; 'here is my passport.' While the postmistress was examining it, he drew out a green silk purse, to pay the postage; and, I promise you, one end was stuffed with gold till it looked as large as an egg. I know it was gold, for I saw the bright, yellow pieces shining through the meshes of the purse; and I am quite certain there must have been at least forty or fifty louis in it!" cried Calabash, her eyes glowing with a covetous eagerness to possess herself of such a treasure. "And only to think," continued she, "of a person, with all that money in his pocket, going about like an old beggar! No doubt he is some old miser, too rich to be able to count his hoards. One good thing, mother, we know his name; that may assist us in gaining admittance into the house. As soon as Amandine can find out for us whether he has any servants or not—"

A loud barking of dogs here interrupted Calabash.

"Listen, mother," cried she; "no doubt the dogs hear the sound of a boat approaching; it must be either Martial or Nicholas."

At the mention of Martial's name, the features of Amandine expressed a sort of troubled joy. After waiting for some minutes, during which the anxious looks of the impatient child were fixed on the door, she saw, to her extreme regret, Nicholas, the future accomplice of Barbillon, make his appearance. The physiognomy of the youth was at once ignoble and ferocious; small in figure, short in stature, and mean in appearance, no one would have deemed him a likely person to pursue the dangerous and criminal path he trod. Unhappily, a sort of wild, savage energy supplied the place of that physical force in which the hardened

youth was deficient. Over his blue loose frock he wore a kind of vest, without sleeves, made of goatskin, covered with long brown hair. As he entered, he threw on the ground a lump of copper, which he had with difficulty carried on his shoulder.

"A famous good night I have made of it, mother!" said he, in a hoarse and hollow voice, after he had freed himself from his burden. "Look there! There's a prize. Well, I've got three more lumps of copper, quite as big as that, in my boat, a bundle of clothes, and a case filled with something, I know not what, for I did not waste my time in opening it. Perhaps I have been robbed on my way home; we shall see."

"And the man you were to meet on the Quai de Billy?" inquired Calabash, while the widow regarded her son in silence.

The only reply made by the young man consisted in his plunging his hand into the pocket of his trousers, and jingling a quantity of silver.

"Did you take all that from him?" cried Calabash.

"No, I didn't; he shelled out two hundred francs of his own accord; and he will fork out eight hundred more as soon as I have — But that's enough; let's, first of all, unload my boat; we can jabber afterwards. Is not Martial here?"

"No," said his sister.

"So much the better; we will put away the swag before he sees it; leastways, if he can be kept from knowing about it."

"What! Are you afraid of him, you coward?" asked Calabash, provokingly.

Nicholas shrugged his shoulders significantly; then replied:

"Afraid of him? No, I should rather think not! But I have a strong suspicion he means to sell us, — that is my only fear; as for any other sort of dread,

my weazen-slicer (knife) has rather too keen an edge for that!"

"Ah, when he is not here, you are full of boast and brag; but only let him show his face, and you are quiet as a mouse!"

This reproach seemed quite thrown away upon Nicholas, who, affecting not to have heard it, exclaimed:

"Come, come! Let's unload the boat at once. Where is François, mother? He could help us a good deal."

"Mother has locked him up, after having preciously flogged him; and, I can tell you, he will have to go to bed without any supper."

"Well and good as far as that goes; but still, he might lend a hand in unloading the boat, — eh, mother? Because, then myself and Calabash could fetch all in at once."

The widow raised her hand, and pointed with her finger towards the ceiling. Her daughter perfectly comprehended the signal, and departed at once to fetch François.

The countenance of the widow Martial had become less cloudy since the arrival of Nicholas, whom she greatly preferred to Calabash, but by no means entertaining for him the affection she felt for her Toulon son, as she designated him; for the maternal love of this ferocious woman appeared to increase in proportion to the criminality of her offspring. This perverse preference will serve to account for the widow's indifference towards her two younger children, neither of whom exhibited any disposition to evil, as well as her perfect hatred of Martial, her eldest son, who, although not leading an altogether irreproachable life, might still have passed for a perfectly honest and well-conducted person if placed in comparison with Nicholas, Calabash, or his brother, the felon at Toulon.

"Which road did you take to-night?" inquired the widow of her son.

"Why, as I returned from the Quai de Billy, where, you know, I had to go to meet the gentleman who appointed to see me there, I spied a barge moored alongside the quay; it was as dark as pitch. 'Halloa!' says I, 'no light in the cabin? No doubt,' says I, 'all hands are ashore. I'll just go on board, and have a look; if I meet any one, it's easy to ask for a bit of string, and make up a fudge about wanting to splice my oar.' So up the side I climbs, and ventures into the cabin. Not a soul was there; so I began collecting all I could find: clothes, a great box, and, on the deck, four quintals of copper. So, you may guess, I was obliged to make two journeys. The vessel was loaded with copper and iron; but here comes François and Calabash. Now, then, let's be off to the boat. Here, you young un, you Amandine! Look sharp, and make yourself useful; you can carry the clothes; we must get new things, you know, before we can throw aside our old ones."

Left alone, the widow busied herself in preparations for the family supper. She placed on the table bottles, glasses, earthenware, plates, with forks and spoons of silver; and, by the time this occupation was completed, her offspring returned heavily laden.

Little François staggered beneath the weight of copper which he carried on his shoulders, and Amandine was almost buried beneath the mass of stolen garments which she bore on her head, while Nicholas and Calabash brought in between them a wooden case, on the top of which lay the fourth lump of copper.

"The case, — the case!" cried Calabash, with savage eagerness. "Come, let's rip it open, and know what's in it."

The lumps of copper were flung on the ground. Nicholas took the heavy hatchet he carried in his belt, and introduced its strong iron head between the lid and

the box which he had set down in the middle of the kitchen, and endeavoured with all his strength to force it open. The red and flickering light of the fire illumined this scene of pillage, while, from without, the loud gusts of the night wind increased in violence.

Nicholas, meanwhile, attired in his goatskin vest, stooped over the box, and essayed with all his might to wrench off the top, breaking out into the most horrible and blasphemous expressions, as he found the solidity of the fastenings resist all his endeavours to arrive at a knowledge of its contents; and Calabash, her eyes inflamed by covetousness, her cheeks flushed by the excitement of plunder, knelt down beside the case, on which she leaned her utmost weight, in order to give more power to the action of the lever employed by Nicholas. The widow, separated from the group by the table, on the other side of which she was standing, in her eagerness to behold the spoils, threw herself almost across the table, the better to gaze on the booty; her longing eyes sparkled with eagerness to learn the value of it. And finally — though unhappily, too true to human nature — the two children, whose naturally good inclinations had so often triumphed over the sea of vice and domestic corruption by which they were surrounded, even they, forgetting at once both their fears and their scruples, were alike infected by the same fatal curiosity.

Huddling close to each other, their eyes glittering with excitement, the breathing short and quick, François and Amandine seemed of all the party most impatient to ascertain the contents of the case, and the most irritated and out of patience with the slow progress made by Nicholas in his attempts to break it open. At length the lid yielded to the powerful and repeated blows dealt on it by the vigorous arm of the young man, and as its fragments fell on the ground a loud, exulting cry rose from the joyful and almost breathless

group, who, joining in one wild mass, from the mother to the little girl, rushed forward, and with savage haste threw themselves on the opened box, which, forwarded, doubtless, by some house in Paris to a fashionable draper and mercer residing near the banks of the river, contained a large assortment of the different materials employed in female attire.

"Nicholas has not done amiss!" cried Calabash, unfolding a piece of mousseline-de-laine.

"No, faith!" returned the plunderer, opening, in his turn, a parcel of silk handkerchiefs; "I shall manage to pay myself for my trouble."

"Levantine, I declare!" cried the widow, dipping into the box, and drawing forth a rich silk. "Ah, that is a thing that fetches a price as readily as a loaf of bread."

"Oh, Bras Rouge's receiver, who lives in the Rue du Temple, will buy all the finery, and be glad of it. And Father Micou, the man who lets furnished lodgings in the Quartier St. Honoré, will take the rest of the swag."

"Amandine," whispered François to his little sister, "what a beautiful cravat one of those handsome silk handkerchiefs Nicholas is holding in his hand would make, wouldn't it?"

"Oh, yes; and what a sweet pretty *marmotte* it would make for me!" replied the child, in rapture at the very idea.

"Well, it must be confessed, Nicholas," said Calabash, "that it was a lucky thought of yours to go on board that barge, — famous! Look, here are shawls, too! How many, I wonder? One, two, three. And just see here, mother! This one is real Bourre de Soie."

"Mother Burette would give at least five hundred francs for the lot," said the widow, after closely examining each article.

"Then, I'll be sworn," answered Nicholas, "if she'll give that, the things are worth at least fifteen hundred

francs. But, as the old saying is, 'The receiver's as bad as the thief.' Never mind; so much the worse for us! I'm no hand at splitting differences; and I shall be quite flat enough this time to let Mother Burette have it all her own way, and Father Micou also, for the matter of that; but then, to be sure, he is a friend."

"I don't care for that, he'd cheat you as soon as another; I'm up to the old dealer in marine stores. But then these rascally receivers know we cannot do without them," continued Calabash, putting on one of the shawls, and folding it around her, "and so they take advantage of it."

"There is nothing else," said Nicholas, coming to the bottom of the box.

"Now, let us put everything away," said the widow.

"I shall keep this shawl for myself," exclaimed Calabash.

"Oh, you will, will you?" cried Nicholas, roughly; "that depends whether I choose to let you or not. You are always laying your clutches on something or other; you are Madame Free-and-Easy!"

"You are so mighty particular yourself — about taking whatever you have a fancy to, arn't you?"

"Ah, that's as different as different can be! I filch at the risk of my life; and if I had happened to have been nabbed on board the barge, you would not have been trounced for it."

"La! Well, don't make such a fuss, — take your shawl! I'm sure I don't want it; I was only joking about it," continued Calabash, flinging the shawl back into the box; "but you never can stand the least bit of fun."

"Oh, I don't speak because of the shawl; I am not stingy enough to squabble about a trumpery shawl. One more or less would make no difference in the price Mother Burette would give for the things; she buys in the lump, you know," continued Nicholas; "only I consider that, instead of calling out you should keep the

shawl, it would have been more decent to have asked me to give it you. There — there it is — keep it — you may have it; keep it, I say, or else I'll just fling it into the fire to make the pot boil."

These words entirely appeased Calabash, who forthwith accepted the shawl without further scruple.

Nicholas appeared seized with a sudden fit of generosity, for, ripping off the fag end from one of the pieces of silk, he contrived to separate two silk handkerchiefs, which he threw to Amandine and François, who had been contemplating them with longing looks, saying:

"There! that's for you brats; just a little taste to give you a relish for prigging; it's a thing you'll take to more kindly if it's made agreeable to you. And now, get off to bed. Come, look sharp, I've got a deal to say to mother. There — you shall have some supper brought up-stairs to you."

The delighted children clapped their hands with joy, and triumphantly waved the stolen handkerchiefs which had just been presented to them.

"What do you say now, you little stupids?" said Calabash to them; "will you ever go and be persuaded by Martial again? Did he ever give you beautiful silk handkerchiefs like those, I should be glad to know?"

François and Amandine looked at each other, then hung down their heads, and made no answer.

"Answer, can't you?" persisted Calabash, roughly. "I ask you whether you ever received such presents from Martial?"

"No," answered François, gazing with intense delight on his bright red silk handkerchief, "Brother Martial never gives us anything."

To which Amandine replied, in a low yet firm voice:

"Ah, François, that is because Martial has nothing to give anybody."

"He might have as much as other people if he chose to steal it, mightn't he, François?" said Nicholas, brutally.

"Yes, brother," replied François. Then, as if glad to quit the subject, he resumed his ecstatic contemplation of his handkerchief, saying:

"Oh, what a real beauty it is! What a fine cravat it will make for Sundays, won't it?"

"That it will," answered Amandine. "And just see, François, how charming I shall look with my sweet pretty handkerchief tied around my head, — so, brother."

"What a rage the little children at the lime-kilns will be in when they see you pass by!" said Calabash, fixing her malignant glances on the poor children to ascertain whether they comprehended the full and spiteful meaning of her words, — the hateful creature seeking, by the aid of vanity, to stifle the last breathings of virtue within their young minds. "The brats at the lime-kilns," continued she, "will look like beggar children beside you, and be ready to burst with envy and jealousy at seeing you two looking like a little lady and gentleman with your pretty silk handkerchiefs."

"So they will," cried François. "Ah, and I like my new cravat ever so much the better, Sister Calabash, now you have told me that the children at the kilns will be so mad with me for being smarter than they; don't you, Amandine?"

"No, François, I don't find that makes any difference. But I am quite glad I have got such a nice new pretty *marmotte* as that will make, all the same."

"Go along with you, you little mean-spirited thing!" cried Calabash, disdainfully; "you have not a grain of proper pride in you." Then, snatching from the table a morsel of bread and cheese, she thrust them into the children's hands, saying, "Now, get off to bed, — there is a lanthorn; take care you don't set fire to anything, and be sure to put it out before you go to sleep."

"And hark ye," added Nicholas, "remember that if you dare to say one word to Martial of the box, the copper, or the clothes, I'll make you dance upon red-hot

iron; and, besides that, your pretty silk handkerchiefs shall be taken from you."

After the departure of the children, Nicholas and his sister concealed the box, with its contents, the clothes, and lumps of copper, in a sort of cellar below the kitchen, the entrance to which was by a low flight of steps not far from the fireplace.

"That'll do!" cried the hardened youth. "And now, mother, give us a glass of your very best brandy; none of your poor, every-day stuff, but some of the real right sort, and plenty of it. Faith! I think I've earned a right to eat and to drink whatever you happen to have put by for grand occasions. Come, Calabash, look sharp, and let's have supper. Never mind Martial, he may amuse himself with picking the bones we may leave; they are good enough for him. Now, then, for a bit of gossip over the affair of the individual I went to meet on the Quai de Billy, because that little job must be settled at once if I mean to pouch the money he promised me. I'll tell you all about it, mother, from beginning to end. But first give me something to moisten my throat. Give me some drink, I say! Devilish hard to be obliged to ask so many times, considering what I have done for you all to-day! I tell you I can stand treat, if that's what you are waiting for."

And here Nicholas again jingled the five-franc pieces he had in his pocket; then flinging his goatskin waistcoat and black woollen cap into a distant part of the room, he seated himself at table before a huge dish of ragout made of mutton, a piece of cold veal, and a salad. As soon as Calabash had brought wine and brandy, the widow, still gloomy and imperturbable, took her place at one side of the table, having Nicholas on her right hand and her daughter on her left; the other side of the table had been destined for Martial and the two younger children. Nicholas then drew from his pocket a long and wide Spanish knife, with a horn handle and a trenchant

blade. Contemplating this murderous weapon with a sort of savage pleasure, he said to the widow :

" There's my bread-earner, — what an edge it has ! Talking of bread, mother, just hand me some of that beside you."

" And talking of knives, too," replied Calabash, " François has found out — you know what — in the wood-pile ! "

" What do you mean ? " asked Nicholas, not understanding her.

" Why, he saw — one of the feet ! "

" Phew ! " whistled Nicholas ; " what, of the man ? "

" Yes," answered the widow, concisely, at the same time placing a large slice of meat on her son's plate.

" That's droll enough," returned the young ruffian ; " I'm sure the hole was dug deep enough ; but I suppose the ground has sunk in a good deal."

" It must all be thrown into the river to-night," said the widow.

" That is the surest way to get rid of further bother," said Nicholas.

" Yes," chimed in Calabash, " throw it in the river, with a heavy stone fastened to it, with part of an old boat-chain."

" We are not quite such fools as that either," returned Nicholas, pouring out for himself a brimming glass of wine. Then, holding the bottle up, he said, addressing the widow : " Come, mother, let's touch glasses, and drink to each other. You seem a cup too low, and it will cheer you up."

The widow drew back her glass, shook her head, and said to her son :

" Tell me of the man you met on the Quai de Billy."

" Why, this is it," said Nicholas, without ceasing to eat and drink : " When I got to the landing-place, I fastened my boat, and went up the steps of the quay as the clock was striking seven at the military bakehouse at

Chaillot. You could not see four yards before you, but I walked up and down by the parapet wall for a quarter of an hour, when I heard footsteps moving softly behind me. I stopped, and a man, completely wrapped up in a mantle, approached me, coughing as he advanced. As I paused, he paused; and all I could make out of him was that his cloak hid his nose, and his hat fell over his eyes."

We will inform our readers that this mysterious personage was Jacques Ferrand, the notary, who, anxious to get rid of Fleur-de-Marie, had, that same morning, despatched Madame Séraphin to the Martials, whom he hoped to find the ready instruments of his fresh crime.

"'Bradamanti,' said the man to me," continued Nicholas; "that was the password agreed upon by the old woman, that I might know my man. 'Ravageur,' says I, as was agreed. 'Is your name Martial?' he asked. 'Yes, master.' 'A woman was at your isle today: what did she say to you?' 'That you wished to speak to me on the part of M. Bradamanti.' 'You have a boat?' 'We have four, that's our number: boatmen and ravageurs, from father to son, at your service.' 'This is what I want you to do if you are not afraid —' 'Afraid of what, master?' 'Of seeing a person accidentally drowned. Only you must assist with the accident. Do you understand?' 'Perfectly, master; we must make some individual have a draught of the Seine, as if by accident? I'll do it; only, as the dish to be dressed is a dainty one, why, the seasoning will cost rather dear.' 'How much for two?' 'For two? What! are there two persons who are to have a mess of broth in the river?' 'Yes.' 'Five hundred francs a head, master; that's not too dear.' 'Agreed, for a thousand francs.' 'Money down, master?' 'Two hundred francs now, and the rest afterwards.' 'Then you doubt me, master?' 'No; you may pocket the two

hundred francs, without completing the bargain.' 'And you may say, after it's done, "Don't you wish you may get it?"' 'That as may be; but does it suit you? yes or no. Two hundred francs down, and on the evening of the day after to-morrow, here, at nine o'clock, I will give you the eight hundred francs.' 'And who will inform you that I have done the trick with these two persons?' 'I shall know; that is my affair. Is it a bargain?' 'Yes, master.' 'Here are two hundred francs. Now listen to me; you will know again the old woman who was at your house this morning?' 'Yes, master.' 'To-morrow, or next day at latest, you will see her come, about four o'clock in the evening, on the bank in face of your island with a young fair girl. The old woman will make a signal to you by waving her handkerchief.' 'Yes, master.' 'What time does it take to go from the bank-side to your island?' 'Twenty minutes, quite.' 'Your boats are flat-bottomed?' 'Flat as your hand, master.' 'Then you must make, very skilfully, a sort of large hole in the bottom of one of these boats, so that, when you open it, the water may flow in rapidly. Do you understand?' 'Quite well, master; how clever you are! I have by me a worn-out old boat, half rotten, that I was going to break up, but it will just do for this one more voyage.' 'You will then leave the island with this boat, with the hole prepared; let a good boat follow you, conducted by some one of your family. Go to the shore, accost the old woman and the fair young girl, and take them on board the boat with the hole in it; then go back towards your island; but, when you are at some distance from the bank, pretend to stoop for some purpose, open the hole, and leap into the other boat, whilst the old woman and the fair young girl —' 'Drink out of the same cup, — that's it, — eh, master?' 'But are you sure you will not be interrupted? Suppose some customers should come to your house?' 'There is no fear, master. At

this time, and especially in winter, no one comes, it is our dead time of year; and, if they come, that would not be troublesome; on the contrary, they are all good friends.' 'Very well. Besides, you in no way compromise yourselves; the boat will be supposed to have sunk from old age, and the old woman who brings the young girl will disappear with her. In order to be quite assured that they are drowned (by accident, mind! quite by accident), you can, if they rise to the surface, or if they cling to the boat, appear to do all in your power to assist them, and —' 'Help them — to sink again! Good, master!' 'It will be requisite that the passage be made after sunset, in order that it may be quite dark when they fall into the water.' 'No, master; for if one does not see clear, how shall we know if the two women swallow their doses at one gulp, or want a second?' 'True; and, therefore, the accident will take place before sunset.' 'All right, master; but the old woman has no suspicion, has she?' 'Not the slightest. When she arrives, she will whisper to you: "The young girl is to be drowned; a little while before you sink the boat, make me a signal, that I may be ready to escape with you." You will reply to the old woman in such a way as to avoid all suspicion.' 'So that she may suppose the young 'un only is going to swallow the dose?' 'But which she will drink as well as the fair girl.' 'It's "downily" arranged, master.' 'But mind the old woman has not the slightest suspicion.' 'Be easy on that score, master; she will be done as nicely as possible.' 'Well, then, good luck to you, my lad! If I am satisfied, perhaps I shall give you another job.' 'At your service, master.' Then," said the ruffian, in conclusion, "I left the man in the cloak, and 'prigged the swag' I've just brought in."

We may glean from Nicholas's recital that the notary was desirous, by a twofold crime, of getting rid at once of Fleur-de-Marie and Madame Séraphin, by causing the

latter to fall into the snare which she thought was only spread for the Goualeuse. It is hardly necessary to repeat that, justly alarmed lest the Chouette should inform Fleur-de-Marie at any moment that she had been abandoned by Madame Séraphin, Jacques Ferrand believed he had a paramount interest in getting rid of this young girl, whose claims might mortally injure him both in his fortune and in his reputation. As to Madame Séraphin, the notary, by sacrificing her, got rid of one of his accomplices (Bradamanti was the other), who might ruin him, whilst they ruined themselves, it is true; but Jacques Ferrand believed that the grave would keep his secrets better than any personal interests.

The felon's widow and Calabash had listened attentively to Nicholas, who had not paused except to swallow large quantities of wine, and then he began to talk with considerable excitement.

"That is not all," he continued. "I have begun another affair with the Chouette and Barbillon of the Rue aux Fêves. It is a capital job, well planted; and if it does not miss fire, it will bring plenty of fish to net, and no mistake. It is to clean out a jewel-matcher, who has sometimes as much as fifty thousand francs in jewelry in her basket."

"Fifty thousand francs!" cried the mother and daughter, whose eyes sparkled with cupidity.

"Yes — quite. Bras Rouge is in it with us. He yesterday opened upon the woman with a letter which we carried to her — Barbillon and I — at her house, Boulevard St. Denis. He's an out-and-outer, Bras Rouge is! As he appears — and, I believe, is — well-to-do, nobody mistrusts him. To make the jewel-matcher bite he has already sold her a diamond worth four hundred francs. She'll not be afraid to come towards nightfall to his cabaret in the Champs Elysées. We shall be concealed there. Calabash may come with us, and take care of my boat along the side of the Seine.

If we are obliged to carry her off, dead or alive, that will be a convenient conveyance, and one that leaves no traces. There's a plan for you! That beggar Bras Rouge is nothing but a good 'un!"

"I have always distrusted Bras Rouge," said the widow. "After that affair of the Rue Montmartre your brother Ambroise was sent to Toulon, and Bras Rouge was set at liberty."

"Because he's so downy there's no proofs against him. But betray others? — never!"

The widow shook her head, as if she were only half convinced of Bras Rouge's probity. After a few moments' reflection she said:

"I like much better that affair of the Quai de Billy for to-morrow or next day evening, — the drowning the two women. But Martial will be in the way as usual."

"Will not the devil's thunder ever rid us of him?" exclaimed Nicholas, half drunk, and striking his long knife savagely on the table.

"I have told mother that we had enough of him, and that we could not go on in this way," said Calabash. "As long as he is here we can do nothing with the children."

"I tell you that he is capable of one day denouncing us, — the villain!" said Nicholas. "You see, mother, if you would have believed me," he added, with a savage and significant air, "all would have been settled!"

"There are other means — "

"This is the best!" said the ruffian.

"Now? No!" replied the widow, with a tone so decided that Nicholas was silent, overcome by the influence of his mother, whom he knew to be as criminal, as wicked, but still more determined than himself.

The widow added, "To-morrow he will quit the island for ever."

"How?" inquired Nicholas and Calabash at the same time.

"When he comes in pick a quarrel with him, — but boldly, mind, — out to his face, as you have never yet dared to do. Come to blows, if necessary. He is powerful, but you will be two, for I will help you. Mind, no steel, — no blood! Let him be beaten, but not wounded."

"And what then, mother?" asked Nicholas.

"We shall then explain afterwards. We will tell him to leave the island next day; if not, that the scenes of the night before will occur over and over again. I know him; these perpetual squabbles disgust him; until now we have let him be too quiet."

"But he is as obstinate as a mule, and is likely enough to insist upon staying, because of the children," observed Calabash.

"He's a regular hound; but a row don't frighten him," said Nicholas.

"One? No!" said the widow. "But every day — day by day — it is hell in earth, and he will give way."

"Suppose he don't?"

"Then I have another sure means to make him go away, — this very night or to-morrow at farthest," replied the widow, with a singular smile.

"Really, mother!"

"Yes, but I prefer rather to annoy him with a row; and, if that don't do, why, then, it must be the other way."

"And if the other way does not succeed, either, mother?" said Nicholas.

"There is one which always succeeds," replied the widow.

Suddenly the door opened, and Martial entered. It blew so strong without that they had not heard the barkings of the dogs at the return of the first-born son of the felon's widow.

CHAPTER V.

THE MOTHER AND SON.

Unaware of the evil designs of his family, Martial entered the kitchen slowly.

Some few words let fall by La Louve in her conversation with Fleur-de-Marie have already acquainted the reader with the singular existence of this man. Endowed with excellent natural instincts, incapable of an action positively base or wicked, Martial did not, however, lead a regular life: he poached on the water; but his strength and his boldness inspired so much fear that the keepers of the river shut their eyes on this irregularity.

To this illegal occupation Martial joined another that was equally illicit. A redoubtable champion, he willingly undertook — and more from excess of courage, from love of the thing, than for gain — to avenge in pugilistic or single-stick encounters those victims who had been overcome by too powerful opponents.

We should add that Martial was very particular in the selection of those causes which he pleaded by strength of fist, and usually took the part of the weak against the strong.

La Louve's lover was very much like François and Amandine. He was of middle height, stout, and broad-shouldered; his thick red hair, cropped short, came in five points over his open brow; his close, harsh, short beard, his broad, bluff cheeks, his projecting nose, flat-

tened at the extremity, his blue and bold eyes, gave to his masculine features a singularly resolute expression.

He was covered with an old glazed hat; and, despite the cold, he had only a worn-out blouse over his vest, and a pair of velveteen trousers, which had seen considerable service. He held in his hand a very thick, knotted stick, which he put down beside him near the dresser.

A large dog, half terrier, half hound, with crooked legs and a black hide, marked with bright red, came in with Martial, but he remained close to the door, not daring to approach the fire, nor the guests who were sitting at table, experience having proved to old Miraut (that was the name of Martial's poaching companion) that he, as well as his master, did not possess much of the sympathy of the family.

"Where are the children?" were Martial's first words, as he sat down to table.

"Where they ought to be," replied Calabash, surlily.

"Where are the children, mother?" said Martial again, without taking the slightest notice of his sister's reply.

"Gone to bed," replied the widow, in a harsh tone.

"Haven't they had their supper, mother?"

"What's that to you?" exclaimed Nicholas, brutally, after having swallowed a large glass of wine to increase his courage, for his brother's disposition and strength had a very strong effect on him.

Martial, as indifferent to the attacks of Nicholas as to those of Calabash, then said to his mother, "I'm sorry the children are gone to bed so soon."

"So much the worse," responded the widow.

"Yes, so much the worse; for I like to have them beside me when I am at supper."

"And we, because they were troublesome and annoyed us, have sent them off," cried Nicholas; "and if you don't like it, why, you can go after them."

Martial, astonished, looked steadfastly at his brother. Then, as if convinced of the futility of a quarrel, he shrugged his shoulders, cut off a slice of bread and a piece of meat.

The dog had come up towards Nicholas, although keeping at a very respectful distance; and the ruffian, irritated at the disdain with which his brother treated him, and hoping to wear out his patience by ill-using his dog, gave Miraut a savage kick, which made the poor brute howl fearfully. Martial turned red, clasped in his hand the knife he held, and struck violently on the table with the handle; but, again controlling himself, he called the dog to him, saying, quietly, "Here, Miraut!" The hound came, and crouched at his master's feet.

This composure quite upset Nicholas's plans, who was desirous of pushing his brother to extremities, in order to produce an explosion. So he added, "I hate dogs — I do; and I won't have this dog remain here." Martial's only reply was to pour out a glass of wine, and drink it off slowly. Exchanging a rapid glance with Nicholas, the widow encouraged him by a signal to continue his hostilities towards Martial, hoping, as we have said, that a violent quarrel would arise that would lead to a rupture and complete separation.

Nicholas, then, taking up the willow stick which the widow had used to beat François, went up to the dog, and, striking him sharply, said, "Get out, you brute, Miraut!"

Up to this time Nicholas had often shown himself sulkily offensive towards Martial, but he had never dared to provoke him with so much audacity and perseverance. La Louve's lover, thinking they were desirous of driving him to extremities for some secret motive, quelled every impulse of temper.

At the cry of the beaten dog, Martial rose, opened the door of the kitchen, made the dog go out, and then

returned, and went on with his supper. This incredible patience, so little in harmony with Martial's usual demeanour, puzzled and nonplussed his aggressors, who looked at each other with amazement. He, affecting to appear wholly unconscious of what was passing around him, ate away with great appetite, keeping profound silence.

"Calabash, take the wine away," said the widow to her daughter.

She hastened to comply, when Martial said, "Stay, I haven't done my supper."

"So much the worse," said the widow, taking the bottle away herself.

"Oh, that's another thing!" answered La Louve's lover. And pouring out a large glass of water, he drank it, smacking his tongue, and exclaiming, "Capital water!"

This excessive calmness irritated the burning anger of Nicholas, already heated by copious libations; but still he hesitated at making a direct attack, well knowing the vast power of his brother. Suddenly he cried out, as if delighted at the idea, "Martial, you were quite right to turn the dog out. It is a good habit to begin to give way, for you have but to wait a bit, and you will see us kick your sweetheart out just as we have driven away your dog."

"Oh, yes; for if La Louve is impudent enough to come to the island when she leaves gaol," added Calabash, who quite understood Nicholas's motive, "I'll serve her out."

"And I'll give her a dip in the mud by the hovel at the end of the island," continued Nicholas; "and, if she gets out, I'll give her a few rattlers over the nob with my wooden shoe, the ——"

This insult addressed to La Louve, whom he loved with savage ardour, triumphed over the pacific resolutions of Martial; he frowned, and the blood mounted

to his cheeks, whilst the veins in his brow swelled and distended like cords. Still, he had so much control over himself as to say to Nicholas, in a voice slightly altered by his repressed wrath:

"Take care of yourself! You are trying to pick a quarrel, and you will find a bone to pick that will be too tough for you."

"A bone for me to pick?"

"Yes; and I'll thrash you more soundly than I did last time."

"What! Nicholas," said Calabash, with a sardonic grin, "did Martial thrash you? Did you hear that, mother? I'm not astonished that Nicholas is so afraid of him."

"He walloped me, because, like a coward, he took me off my guard," exclaimed Nicholas, turning pale with rage.

"You lie! You attacked me unexpectedly; I knocked you flat, and then showed you mercy. But if you talk of my mistress, — I say, mind you, of my mistress, — this time I look it over, — you shall carry my marks for many a long day."

"And suppose I choose to talk of La Louve?" inquired Calabash.

"Why, I'll pull your ears to put you on your guard; and if you begin again, why, so will I."

"And suppose I speak of her?" said the widow, slowly.

"You?"

"Yes, — I!"

"You?" said Martial, making a violent effort over himself; "you?"

"You'll beat me, too, I suppose, — won't you?"

"No; but, if you speak to me unkindly of La Louve, I'll give Nicholas a hiding he shall long remember. So now, mind! It is his affair as well as yours."

"You?" exclaimed the ruffian, rising, and drawing his dangerous Spanish knife; "you give me a hiding?"

"Nicholas, no steel!" cried the widow, quickly, leaving her seat, and trying to seize her son's arm; but he, drunk with wine and passion, repulsed his mother savagely, and rushed at his brother.

Martial receded rapidly, laid hold of the thick, knotted stick which he had put down by the dresser, as he entered, and betook himself to the defensive.

"Nicholas, no steel!" repeated the widow.

"Let him alone!" cried Calabash, taking up the ravageur's hatchet.

Nicholas, still brandishing his formidable knife, watched for a moment when he could spring on his brother.

"I tell you," he exclaimed, "you and your trollop, La Louve, that'll I'll slash your eyes out; and here goes to begin! Help, mother! Help, Calabash! Let's make cold meat of the scamp; he's been in our way too long already!" And, believing the moment favourable for his attack, the brigand dashed at his brother with his uplifted knife.

Martial, who was a dexterous cudgeller, retreated a pace rapidly, raising his stick, which, as quick as lightning, cut a figure of eight, and fell so heavily on the right forearm of Nicholas that he, seized with a sudden and overpowering pain, dropped his trenchant weapon.

"Villain, you have broken my arm!" he shouted, grasping with his left hand the right arm, which hung useless by his side.

"No; for I felt my stick rebound!" replied Martial, kicking, as he spoke, the knife underneath the dresser.

Then, taking advantage of the pain which Nicholas was suffering, he seized him by the collar, and thrust him violently backwards, until he had reached the door of the little cellar we have alluded to, which he opened with one hand, whilst, with the other, he thrust his brother into it, and locked him in, all stupefied as he was with this sudden attack.

Then, turning round upon the two women, he seized Calabash by the shoulders, and, in spite of her resistance, her shrieks, and a blow from the hatchet, which cut his head slightly, he shut her up in the lower room of the cabaret, which communicated with the kitchen.

Then addressing the widow, who was still stupefied with this manœuvre, as skilful as it was sudden, Martial said to her, calmly, "Now, mother, you and I are alone."

"Yes, we are alone," replied the widow, and her usually immobile features became excited, her sallow skin grew red, a gloomy fire lighted up her dull eye, whilst anger and hate gave to her countenance a terrible expression. "Yes, we two are alone now!" she repeated, in a menacing voice. "I have waited for this moment; and at length you shall know all that I have on my mind."

"And I will tell you all I have on my mind."

"If you live to be a hundred years old, I tell you you shall remember this night."

"I shall remember it, unquestionably. My brother and sister have tried to murder me, and you have done nothing to prevent them. But come, let me hear what you have against me?"

"What have I?"

"Yes."

"Since your father's death you have acted nothing but a coward's part."

"I?"

"Yes, a coward's! Instead of remaining with us to support us, you went off to Rambouillet, to poach in the woods with that man who sells game whom you knew at Bercy."

"If I had remained here, I should have been at the galleys like Ambroise, or on the point of going there like Nicholas. I would not be a robber like the rest, and that is the cause of your hatred."

"And what track are you following now? You

steal game, you steal fish, — thefts without danger, — a coward's thefts!"

"Fish, like game, is no man's property. To-day belongs to one, to-morrow to another. It is his who can take it. I don't steal. As to being a coward — "

"Why, you fight — and for money — men who are weaker than yourself."

"Because they have beaten men weaker than themselves."

"A coward's trade, — a coward's trade!"

"Why, there are more honest pursuits, it is true. But it is not for you to tell me this!"

"Then why did you not take up with those honest trades, instead of coming here skulking and feeding out of my saucepans?"

"I give you the fish I catch, and what money I have. It isn't much, but it's enough; and I don't cost you anything. I have tried to be a locksmith to earn more; but when one has from one's infancy led a vagabond life on the river and in the woods, it is impossible to confine oneself to one spot. It is a settled thing, and one's life is decided. And then," added Martial, with a gloomy air, "I have always preferred living alone on the water or in the forest. There no one questions me; whilst elsewhere men twit me about my father, who was (can I deny it?) guillotined, — of my brother, a galley-slave, — of my sister, a thief!"

"And what do you say of your mother?"

"I say — "

"What?"

"I say she is dead."

"You do right; it is as if I were, for I renounce you, dastard! Your brother is at the galleys; your grandfather and your father finished their lives daringly on the scaffold, mocking the priest and the executioner! Instead of avenging them you tremble!"

"Avenging them?"

"Yes, by showing yourself a real Martial, spitting at the headsman's knife and the red cassock, and ending like father, mother, brother, sister — "

Accustomed as he was to the savage excitement of his mother, Martial could not forbear shuddering. The countenance of the widow as she uttered the last words was fearful. She continued, with increasing wrath :

"Oh, coward ! and even worse than coward ! You wish to be honest ! Honest ? Why, won't you ever be despised, repulsed, as the son of an assassin or the brother of a felon ? But you, instead of rousing your revenge and wrath, this makes you frightened ! Instead of biting, you run away ! When they guillotined your father, you left us, — coward ! And you knew we could not leave the island to go into the city, because they call after us, and pelt us with stones, like mad dogs. Oh, they shall pay for it, I can tell you, — they shall pay for it ! "

"A man ? — ten men would not make me afraid ! But to be called after by all the world as the son and brother of criminals ! Well, I could not endure it. I preferred going into the woods and poaching with Pierre, who sells game."

"Why didn't you remain in the woods ? "

"I returned because I got into trouble with a keeper, and besides on the children's account, because they are of an age to take to evil from example."

"And what is that to you ? "

"To me ? Why, I will not allow them to become depraved like Ambroise, Nicholas, and Calabash."

"Indeed ! "

"And if they were left with you, then they would not fail to become so. I went apprentice to try and gain a livelihood, so that I might take them into my own care and leave the island with the children ; but in Paris everything was known, and it was always, 'You son of

the guillotined!' or, 'You brother of the felon!' I had battles daily, and I grew tired of it."

"But you didn't grow tired of being honest, — that answered so well! Instead of having the pluck to come to us, and do as we do, — as the children will do, in spite of you, — yes, in spite of you! You think to cajole them with your preaching! But we are always here. François is already one of us, or nearly. Let the occasion serve, and he'll be one of the band."

"I tell you, no!"

"You will see, — yes! I know what I say. He has vice in him; but you spoil him. As to Amandine, as soon as she is fifteen she will begin on her own account! Ah, they throw stones at us! Ah, they pursue us like mad dogs! They shall see what our family is made of! Except you, dastard; for here you are the only one who brings down shame upon us!" [1]

"That's a pity!"

"And as you may be spoiled amongst us, why, to-morrow you shall leave this place, and never return to it."

Martial looked at his mother with surprise, then, after a moment's silence, said, "Was it for this that you tried to get up a quarrel with me at supper?"

"Yes, to show you what you might expect if you would stay here in spite of us, — a hell upon earth, — I tell you, a hell! Every day a quarrel and blows —

[1] These frightful facts are, unfortunately, not exaggerated. The following is from the admirable report of M. de Bretignères on the Penitentiary Colony of Mettray (March 12, 1843):

"The civil condition of our colonists it is important to state. Amongst them we count thirty-two natural children; thirty-four whose fathers and mothers are re-married; fifty-one whose parents are in prison; 124 whose parents have not been pursued by justice, but are in the utmost distress. These figures are eloquent, and full of instruction. They allow us to go from effects to causes, and give us the hope of arresting the progress of an evil whose origin is thus arrived at. The number of parents who are criminals enable us to appreciate the education which the children have received under the tutelage of such instructors. Taught evil by their fathers, the sons have become wicked by their orders, and have believed they were acting properly in following their example. Arrested by the hand of the law, they resign themselves to share the destiny of their family in prison, to which they only bring the emulation of vice; and it is absolutely necessary that a ray of divine light should still exist within these rude and coarse natures, in order that all the germs of honesty should not be utterly destroyed."

struggles. And we shall not be alone as we were this evening; we shall have friends who will help us. And you will not hold out for a week."

"Do you think to frighten me?"

"I only tell you what will happen."

"I don't heed it. I shall stay!"

"You will stay?"

"Yes."

"In spite of us?"

"In spite of you, of Calabash, of Nicholas, and all blackguards like him."

"Really, you make me laugh."

From the lips of this woman, with her repulsive and ferocious look, these words were horrible.

"I tell you I will remain here until I find the means of gaining my livelihood elsewhere with the children. Alone, I should not long be unemployed, for I could return to the woods; but, on their account, I may be some time in finding what I am seeking for. In the meanwhile, here I remain."

"Oh, you remain until the moment when you can take away the children?"

"Exactly as you say."

"Take away the children?"

"When I say to them 'Come!' they will come; and quickly too, I promise you."

The widow shrugged her shoulders, and replied:

"Listen! I told you a short time since that, even if you were to live for a hundred years, you should recollect this night. I will explain those words. But, before I do so, have you quite made up your mind?"

"Yes! Yes! Yes! A thousand times over, yes!"

"In a little while, however, you will say 'No! No! No! A thousand times, no!' Listen to me attentively! Do you know the trade your brother follows?"

"I have my suspicions; but I do not wish to know."

"You shall know. He steals!"

"So much the worse for him!"

"And for you!"

"For me?"

"He commits robberies at night, with forcible entry, — burglary; a case of the galleys. We receive what he plunders. If we are discovered, we shall be sentenced to the same punishment as he is, as receivers, and you too. They will sweep away the whole family, and the children will be turned out into the streets, where they will learn the trade of their father and grandfather as well as here."

"I apprehended as a receiver, — as your accomplice? Where's the proofs?"

"No one knows how you live. You are vagabondising on the water; you have the reputation of a bad fellow; you dwell with us, and who will believe that you are ignorant of our thefts and receivings?"

"I will prove the contrary."

"We will accuse you as our accomplice."

"Accuse me! And why?"

"To pay you off for staying amongst us against our will."

"Just now you tried to make me frightened in one way, now you are trying another tack. But it won't do. I will prove that I never robbed. I remain."

"Ah! You remain? Listen then, again! Do you remember last year a person who passed the Christmas night here?"

"Christmas night?" said Martial, trying to recall his memory.

"Try and remember, — try!"

"I do not recollect."

"Don't you recollect that Bras Rouge brought here in the evening a well-dressed man, who was desirous of concealing himself?"

"Yes, now I remember. I went up to bed and left him taking his supper with you. He passed the night

here, and, before daybreak, Nicholas took him to St. Ouen."

"You are sure Nicholas took him to St. Ouen?"

"You told me so next morning."

"On Christmas night you were here?"

"Yes; and what of that?"

"Why, that night this man, who had a good deal of money about him, was murdered in this house."

"Mur—! He! Here?"

"And robbed and buried by the little wood-pile."

"It is not true!" cried Martial, becoming pale with horror, and unable to believe in this fresh crime of his family. "You mean to frighten me. Once more, it is not true?"

"Ask François what he saw this morning in the wood-pile."

"François! And what did he see?"

"A man's foot sticking out of the ground. Take a lantern; go and convince your eyes!"

"No," said Martial, wiping his brow, which had burst forth in a cold sweat. "No, I do not believe you. You say it to —"

"To prove to you that, if you remain here in spite of us, you risk every moment being apprehended as an accomplice in robbery and murder. You were here on Christmas night, and we shall declare that you helped us to do this job. How will you prove the contrary?"

"Merciless wretch!" said Martial, hiding his face in his hands.

"Now will you go?" said the widow, with a devilish smile.

Martial was overwhelmed. He, unfortunately, could not doubt what his mother had said to him. The wandering life he led, his dwelling with so criminal a family, must induce the most horrible suspicions of him, and these suspicions would be converted into certainty in the eyes of justice, if his mother, brother, and

sister declared him to be their accomplice. The widow was rejoiced at the depression of her son:

"You have one means of getting out of the difficulty: denounce us!"

"I ought, but I will not; and you know that right well."

"That is why I have told you all this. Now, will you go?"

Martial, wishing to soften this hag, said to her, in a subdued voice:

"Mother, I do not believe you are capable of this murder!"

"As you please; but go!"

"I will go on one condition."

"No condition at all!"

"You shall put the children apprentices somewhere in the country."

"They shall remain here!"

"But, mother, when you have made them like Nicholas, Calabash, Ambroise, my father, — what good will that be to you?"

"To make good 'jobs' by their assistance. We are not too many now. Calabash will remain here with me to keep the cabaret. Nicholas is alone. Once properly instructed, François and Amandine will help him. They have already been pelted with stones, — young as they are, — and they must revenge themselves!"

"Mother, you love Calabash and Nicholas, don't you?"

"Well, if I do, what then?"

"Suppose the children imitate them, and their crimes are detected?"

"Well, what then?"

"They will come to the scaffold, like my father."

"What then? What then?"

"And does not their probable fate make you tremble?"

"That fate will be mine, neither better nor worse. I rob, they rob; I kill, they kill. Whoever takes the

mother will take the young ones; we will not leave each other. If our heads fall, theirs will fall in the same basket, and we shall all take leave at once! We will not retreat! You are the only coward in the family, and we drive you from us!"

"But the children, — the children!"

"The children will grow up, and, but for you, they would have been quite formed already. François is almost ready, and, when you are gone, Amandine will make up for lost time."

"Mother, I entreat of you, consent to having the children sent away from here, and put in apprenticeship at a distance."

"I tell you that they are in apprenticeship here!"

The felon's widow uttered these last words so immovably that Martial lost all hope of mollifying this soul of bronze.

"Since it is so," he replied, "hear me in my turn, mother, — I remain!"

"Ha! ha!"

"Not in this house. I shall be assassinated by Nicholas, or poisoned by Calabash. But, as I have no means of lodging elsewhere, I and the children will occupy the hovel at the end of the island; the door of that is strong, and I will make it still more secure. Once there, I will barricade myself, and, with my gun, my stick, and my dog, I am afraid of no one. To-morrow morning I will take the children with me. During the day they will be with me, either in my boat or elsewhere; and, at night, they shall sleep near me in the hovel. We can live on the fish I catch until I find some means of placing them, and find it I will."

"Oh! That's it, is it?"

"Neither you, nor my brother, nor Calabash can prevent this, can you? If your robberies and murders are discovered during my abode on the island, so much the worse; but I'll chance it. I will declare that I came

back and remained here in consequence of the children, to prevent them from becoming infamous. They will decide. The children shall not remain another day in this abode; and I defy you and your gang to drive me from this island!"

The widow knew Martial's resolution, and the children, who loved their eldest brother as much as they feared her, would certainly follow him unhesitatingly whenever and wherever he called them. As to himself, well armed and most determined, always on his guard, in his boat during the day, and secure and barricaded in the hovel on the island at night, he had nothing to fear from the malevolence of his family.

Martial's project, then, might be realised in every particular; but the widow had many reasons for preventing its execution. In the first place, as honest work-people sometimes consider the number of their children as wealth, in consequence of the services which they derive from them, the widow relied on Amandine and François to assist her in her atrocities. Then, what she had said of her desire to avenge her husband and son was true. Certain beings, nurtured, matured, hardened in crime, enter into open revolt, into war of extermination, against society, and believe that, by fresh crimes, they shall avenge themselves for the just penalties which have been exacted from them and those belonging to them. Then, too, the sinister designs of Nicholas against Fleur-de-Marie, and afterwards against the jewel-matcher, might be thwarted by Martial's presence.

The widow had hoped to effect an immediate separation between herself and Martial, either by keeping up and aiding Nicholas's quarrel, or by disclosing to him that, if he obstinately persisted in remaining in the island, he ran the risk of being suspected as an accomplice in many crimes.

As cunning as she was penetrating, the widow, per-

ceiving that she had failed, saw that she must have recourse to treachery to entrap her son in her bloody snare, and she therefore replied, after a lengthened pause, with assumed bitterness:

"I see your plan. You will not inform against us yourself, but you will contrive that the children shall do so."

"I?"

"They know now that there is a man buried here; they know that Nicholas has robbed. Once apprenticed they would talk, we should be apprehended, and we should all suffer, — you with us. That is what would happen if I listened to you, and allowed you to place the children elsewhere. Yet you say you do not wish us any harm? I do not ask you to love me; but do not hasten the hour of our apprehension!"

The milder tone of the widow made Martial believe that his threats had produced a salutary effect on her, and he fell into the fearful snare.

"I know the children," he replied; "and I am sure that, in desiring them to say nothing, not a word will they say. Besides, in one way or another, I shall be always with them, and I will answer for their silence."

"Can we answer for the chatter of children, especially in Paris, where people are so curious and so gossiping? It is as much that they should not betray us, as that they should assist us in our plans, that I desire to keep them here."

"Don't they go sometimes to the villages, and even to Paris? Who could prevent them from talking if they were inclined to talk? If they were a long way off, why, so much the better; for what they would then say would do us no harm."

"A long way off, — and where?" inquired the widow, looking steadfastly at her son.

"Let me take them away, — where is no consequence to you."

"How will you and they live?"

"My old master, the locksmith, is a worthy man, and I will tell him as much as he need know, and, perhaps, he will lend me something for the sake of the children; with that I will go and apprentice them a long way off. We will leave in two days, and you will hear no more of us."

"No, no! I prefer their remaining with me. I shall then be perfectly sure of them."

"Then I will take up my quarters in the hovel on the island until something turns up. I have a way and a will of my own, and you know it."

"Yes, I know it. Oh, how I wish you were a thousand miles away! Why didn't you remain in your woods?"

"I offer to rid you of myself and the children."

"What! Would you leave La Louve here, whom you love so much?" asked the widow, suddenly.

"That's my affair. I know what I shall do. I have my plans."

"If I let you take away Amandine and François, will you never again set foot in Paris?"

"Before three days have passed, we shall have departed, and be as dead to you."

"I prefer that to having you here, and always distrusting you and them. So, since I must give way, take them, and be off as quickly as possible, and never let me see you more!"

"Agreed!"

"Agreed! Give me the key of the cellar, that I may let Nicholas out!"

"No; let him sleep his liquor off, and I'll give you the key to-morrow morning."

"And Calabash?"

"Ah, that's another affair! Let her out when I have gone. I can't bear the sight of her."

"Go, and may hell confound you!"

"That's your farewell, mother?"

"Yes."

"Fortunately your last!" said Martial.

"My last!" responded the widow.

Her son lighted a candle, then opened the kitchen door, whistled to his dog, who ran in, quite delighted at being admitted, and followed his master to the upper story of the house.

"Go,— your business is settled!" muttered the widow, shaking her clenched hand at her son, as he went up the stairs; "but it is your own act."

Then, by Calabash's assistance, who brought her a bundle of false keys, the widow unlocked the cellar door where Nicholas was, and set him at liberty.

CHAPTER VI.

FRANÇOIS AND AMANDINE.

François and Amandine slept in a room immediately over the kitchen, and at the end of a passage which communicated with several other apartments that were used as "company rooms" for the guests who frequented the cabaret. After having eaten their frugal supper, instead of putting out their lantern, as the widow had ordered them, the two children watched, leaving their door ajar, for their brother Martial's passing on his way to his own chamber.

Placed on a crippled stool, the lantern shed its dull beams through the transparent horn. Walls of plaster, with here and there brown deal boards, a flock-bed for François, a little old child's bed, much too short, for Amandine, a pile of broken chairs and dismembered benches, mementoes of the turbulent visitors to the cabaret of the Isle du Ravageur, — such was the interior of this dog-hole.

Amandine, seated at the edge of the bed, was trying how to dress her head *en marmotte*, with the stolen silk handkerchief, the gift of her brother Nicholas. François was on his knees, holding up a piece of broken glass to his sister, who, with her head half turned, was employed in spreading out the large rosette which she had made in tying the two ends of the kerchief together. Wonder-struck at this head-dress, François for an instant neglected to present the bit of glass in such a way that her face could be reflected in it.

"Lift the looking-glass higher," said Amandine; "I

can't see myself at all now! There, that's it, — that'll do! Hold it so a minute! Now I've done it! Well, look! How have I done my head?"

"Oh, capitally, — excellently! What a handsome rosette! You'll make me just such a one for my cravat, won't you?"

"Yes, directly. But let me walk up and down a little. You can go before me — backwards — holding the glass up, just in that way. There — so! I can then see myself as I walk."

François then went through this difficult manœuvre to the great satisfaction of Amandine, who strutted up and down in all her pride and dignity, under the large bow of her head attire.

Very simple and unsophisticated under any other circumstances, this coquetry became guilt when displayed in reference to the produce of a robbery of which François and Amandine were not ignorant. Another proof of the frightful facility with which children, however well disposed, become corrupted almost imperceptibly when they are continually immersed in a criminal atmosphere.

Then, the sole mentor of these unfortunate children, their brother Martial, was by no means irreproachable himself, as we have already said. Incapable, it is true, of a theft or a murder, still he led a vagabond and ill-regulated life. Undoubtedly his mind revolted at the crimes of his family. He loved these two children very fondly, and protected them from ill-treatment, endeavouring to withdraw them from the pernicious influences of the family; but not taking his stand on the foundations of rigorous and sound morality, his advice was but an ineffective safeguard to these children. They refused to commit certain bad actions, not from honest sentiments, but in order to obey Martial, whom they loved, and to disobey their mother, whom they dreaded and hated.

As to ideas of right and wrong, they had none, familiarised as they were with the infamous examples which they had every day under their eyes; for, as we have said, this country cabaret, haunted by the refuse of the lowest order, was the theatre of most disgraceful orgies and most disgusting debaucheries; and Martial, opposed as he was to thefts and murders, appeared perfectly indifferent to these infamous saturnalia.

It may be supposed, therefore, that the instincts of morality in these children were doubtful and precarious, especially those of François, who had reached that dangerous time of life when the mind pauses, and, oscillating between good and evil, might be in a moment lost or saved.

"How well you look in that handkerchief, sister!" said François; "it is very pretty. When we go to play on the shore by the chalk-burner's lime-kiln you must dress yourself in this manner, to make the children jealous who pelt us with stones and call us little guillotines. And I shall put on my nice red cravat, and we will say to them, 'Never mind, you haven't such pretty silk handkerchiefs as we have!'"

"But, I say, François," said Amandine, after a moment's reflection, "if they knew that the handkerchiefs we wear were stolen, they would call us little thieves."

"Well, and what should we care if they did call us little thieves?"

"Why, not at all, if it were not true. But now —"

"Since Nicholas gave us these handkerchiefs, we didn't steal them!"

"No; but he took them out of a barge; and Brother Martial says no one ought to steal."

"But, as Nicholas states, that is no affair of ours."

"Do you think so, François?"

"Of course I do."

"Still, it seems to me that I would rather the person who really owns them had given them to us. What do you say, François?"

"Oh, it's all one to me! They were given to us, and so they're ours."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Why, yes — yes; make yourself easy about that."

"So much the better, then, for we are not doing what Brother Martial forbids, and we have such nice handkerchiefs!"

"But, Amandine, if he had known the other day that Calabash had made you take the plaid handkerchief from the peddler's pack whilst his back was turned?"

"Oh, François, don't talk about it; I have been so very sorry. But I was really forced to do it, for my sister pinched me until the blood came, and looked at me so — oh, in such a way! And yet my heart failed me twice, and I thought I never could do it. The peddler didn't find it out; yet, if they had caught me, François, I should have been sent to prison."

"But you weren't caught; so it's just the same as if you had not stolen."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes."

"And in prison how unhappy we must be."

"On the contrary — "

"How do you mean on the contrary?"

"Why, you know the fat cripple who lodges at Father Micou's, the man who buys all Nicholas's things, and keeps a lodging-house in the Passage de la Brasserie?"

"A fat cripple?"

"Why, yes, who came here the end of last autumn from Father Micou, with a man who had monkeys and two women."

"Ah, yes, a stout, lame man, who spent such a deal of money."

"I believe you; he paid for everybody. Don't you

recollect the rows on the water when I pulled them, and the man with the monkeys brought his organ, that they might have music in the boat?"

"Yes; and in the evening the beautiful fireworks they let off, François?"

"And the fat cripple was not stingy, either. He gave me ten sous for myself. He drank nothing but our best wine, and they had chickens at every meal. He spent full eighty francs."

"So much as that, François?"

"Oh, yes!"

"How rich he must be!"

"Not at all. What he spent was money he had gained in prison, from which he had just come."

"Gained all that money in prison?"

"Yes; he said he had seven hundred francs beside, and that, when that was all gone, he should try another good 'job;' and if he were taken, he didn't care, because he should go back to his jolly 'pals in the Stone Jug,' as he said."

"Then he wasn't afraid of prison, François?"

"On the contrary; he told Calabash that they were a party of friends and merrymakers all together; and that he had never had a better bed and better food than when he was in prison. Good meat four times a week, fire all the winter, and a lump of money when he left it; whilst there are fools of honest workmen who are starving with cold and hunger, for want of work."

"Are you sure he said that, François, — the stout lame man?"

"I heard him, for I was rowing him in the punt whilst he told his story to Calabash and the two women, who said that it was the same thing in the female prisons they had just left."

"But then, François, it can't be so bad to steal, if people are so well off in prison."

"Oh, the deuce! I don't know. Here it is only

Brother Martial who says it is wrong to steal; perhaps he is wrong."

"Never mind if he is, François. We ought to believe him, for he loves us so much!"

"Yes, he loves us; and, when he is by, there is no fear of our being beaten. If he had been here this evening, our mother would not have thrashed me so. An old beast! How savage she is! Oh, how I hate her — hate her! And how I wish I was grown up, that I might pay her back the thumps she gives us, especially to you, who can't bear them as well as I can."

"Oh, François, hold your tongue; it quite frightens me to hear you say that you would beat mother!" cried the poor little child, weeping, and throwing her arms around her brother's neck, and kissing him affectionately.

"It's quite true, though," answered François, extricating himself gently from Amandine. "Why are my mother and Calabash always so savage to us?"

"I do not know," replied Amandine, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand. "It is, perhaps, because they sent Brother Ambroise to the galleys, and guillotined our father, that they are unjust towards us."

"Is that our fault?"

"Oh, no! But what would you have?"

"*Ma foi!* If I am always to have beatings, — always, always, at last I should rather steal, as they do, I should. What do I gain by not being a thief?"

"Ah, what would Martial say to that?"

"Ah, but for him, I should have said yes a long time ago, for I am tired of being thumped for ever; why, this evening, my mother was more savage than ever; she was like a fury! It was pitch dark. She didn't say a word; and I felt nothing but her clammy hand holding me by the scruff of my neck, whilst with the other she beat me; and whilst she did so, her eyes seemed to glare in the dark."

"Poor François! for only having said you saw a dead man's bone by the wood-pile."

"Yes, a foot that was sticking out of the ground," said François, shuddering with fright; "I am quite sure of it."

"Perhaps there was a burying-ground there once."

"Perhaps; but then, why did mother say she'd be the death of me, if I said a word about the bone to our Brother Martial? I rather think it is some one who has been killed in a quarrel, and that they have buried him there, that no one might know anything about it."

"You are right; for don't you remember that such a thing did nearly happen once?"

"When?"

"Don't you remember once when M. Barbillon wounded with a knife that tall man, who is so very thin, that he showed himself for money?"

"Oh, the walking skeleton, as they call him? Yes; and mother came and separated them; if she hadn't, I think Barbillon would have killed the tall, thin man. Did you see how Barbillon foamed at the mouth? and his eyes seemed ready to start from his head. Oh, he does not mind who he cuts and slashes with his knife, — he's such a headstrong, passionate fellow!"

"So young and so wicked, François?"

"Tortillard is much younger, and he would be quite as wicked as he, if he were strong enough."

"Oh, yes, he's very, very wicked! The other day he beat me, because I would not play with him."

"He beat you, did he? Then, the first time he comes —"

"No, no, François; it was only in jest."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, quite sure."

"Very well, then, for, if not — But I don't know how he manages, the scamp! But he always has so much money. He's so lucky! When he came here

with the Chouette, he showed us pieces of gold of twenty francs; and didn't he look knowing as he said, 'Oh, you might have the same, if you were not such little muffs!'"

"Muffs?"

"Yes; in slang that means fools, simpletons."

"Yes, to be sure."

"Forty francs in gold! What a many fine things I could buy with that! Couldn't you, Amandine?"

"That I could."

"What should you buy?"

"Let's see," said the little girl, bending her head, and meditating. "I should first buy Brother Martial a good thick outside coat, that would keep him warm in his boat."

"But for yourself, — for yourself."

"I should like a crucifixion, like those image-sellers had on Sunday, you know, under the church porch at Asnières."

"Yes; and, now I think of it, we must not tell mother or Calabash that we went into a church."

"To be sure, for she has always forbidden us to go into a church. What a pity! For church is such a nice place inside, isn't it, François?"

"Yes; and what beautiful silver candlesticks!"

"And the picture of the holy Virgin, how kind she looks!"

"And did you look at the fine lamps, and the handsome cloth on the large table at the bottom, when the priest was saying mass with his two friends, dressed like himself, and who gave him water and wine?"

"Tell me, François, do you remember last year, at the Fête-Dieu, when we saw from here the little communicants, with their white veils, pass over the bridge?"

"What nice nosegays they had!"

"How they sang in a soft tone, holding the ribands of their banners!"

"And how the silver lace of their banners shone in the sunshine! What a deal of money it must have cost!"

"Oh, how beautiful it was! Wasn't it, François?"

"I believe you! And the communicants with their bows of white satin on the arm, and their wax candles, with red velvet and gold on the part by which they hold them."

"And the little boys had their banners, too, hadn't they, François? Ah, François, how I was thumped that day for asking our mother why we did not go in the procession, like the other children!"

"And it was then she forbade us from ever going into a church when we should go into the town, or to Paris; 'Unless it was to rob the poor-box, or the pockets of the people who were hearing mass,' Calabash said, grinning, and showing her nasty yellow teeth. Oh, what a bad thing she is!"

"Oh, and as for that, they should kill me before I would rob in a church; and you, too, François?"

"There, or anywhere; what difference does it make, when once one has made up one's mind?"

"Why, I don't know; but I should be so frightened, I could never do it."

"Because of the priests?"

"No; but because of the portrait of the holy Virgin, who seems so kind and good."

"What consequence is a portrait? It won't eat or drink, you silly child!"

"That's very true; but then I really couldn't. It is not my fault."

"Talking of priests, Amandine, do you remember that day when Nicholas gave me two such hard boxes on the ear, because he saw me make a bow to the curate, who passed on the bank? I had seen everybody salute him, and so I saluted him; I didn't think I was doing any wrong."

"Yes; but then, you know, Brother Martial said, as Nicholas did, that there was no occasion to salute the priests."

At this moment François and Amandine heard footsteps in the passage. Martial was going to his chamber, without any mistrust, after his conversation with his mother, believing that Nicholas was safely locked up until the next morning. Seeing a ray of light coming from out the closet in which the children slept, Martial came into the room. They both ran to him, and he embraced them affectionately.

"What! Not in bed yet, little gossips?"

"No, brother, we waited until you came, that we might see you, and wish you good night," said Amandine.

"And then we heard you speaking very loud below, as if there were a quarrel," added François.

"Yes," said Martial, "I had some dispute with Nicholas, but it was nothing. Besides, I am glad to see you awake, as I have some good news for you."

"For us, brother?"

"Should you like to go away from here, and come with me a long way off?"

"Oh, yes, brother!"

"Yes, brother!"

"Well, then, in two or three days we shall all three leave the island."

"Oh, how delightful!" exclaimed Amandine, clapping her hands with joy.

"And where shall we go to?" inquired François.

"You will see, Mr. Inquisitive; no matter; but where you will learn a good trade, which will enable you to earn your living, be sure of that."

"Then I sha'n't go fishing with you any more, brother?"

"No, my boy, you will be put apprentice to a carpenter or locksmith. You are strong and handy, and with

a good heart; and working hard, at the end of a year you may already have earned something. But you don't seem to like it: why, what ails you now?"

"Why, brother, — I —"

"Come, come! Speak out."

"Why, I'd rather not leave you, but stay with you, and fish, and mend your nets, than go and learn a trade."

"Really?"

"Why, to be shut up in a workshop all day is so very dull; and then it must be so tiresome to be an apprentice."

Martial shrugged his shoulders.

"So, then, you would rather be an idler, a scamp, a vagabond, — eh?" said he, in a stern voice; "and then, perhaps, a thief?"

"No, brother; but I should like to live with you elsewhere, as we live here, that's all."

"Yes, that's it; eat, drink, sleep, and amuse yourself with fishing, like an independent gentleman, — eh?"

"Yes, I should like it."

"Very likely; but you must prefer something else. You see, my poor dear lad, that it is quite time I took you away from here; for, without perceiving it, you have become as idle as the rest. My mother was right, — I fear you have vice in you. And you, Amandine, shouldn't you like to learn some business?"

"Oh, yes, brother; I should like very much to learn anything rather than stay here. I should dearly like to go with you and François."

"But what have you got on your head, my child?" inquired Martial, observing Amandine's very fine head-dress.

"A handkerchief that Nicholas gave me."

"And he gave me one, too," said François, with an air of pride.

"And where did these handkerchiefs come from? I

should be very much surprised to learn that Nicholas bought them to make you a present of."

The two children lowered their eyes, and made no reply. After a second, François said, with a resolute air, "Nicholas gave them to us. We do not know where they came from, do we, Amandine?"

"No, no, brother," replied Amandine, stammering, and turning very red, not daring to look Martial in the face.

"Don't tell lies," said Martial, harshly.

"We don't tell lies," replied François, doggedly.

"Amandine, my child, tell the truth," said Martial, mildly.

"Well, then, to tell the whole truth," replied Amandine, timidly, "these fine handkerchiefs came out of a box of things that Nicholas brought in this evening in his boat."

"And which he had stolen?"

"I think so, brother, — out of a barge."

"So then, François, you lie?" said Martial.

The boy bent down his head, but made no reply.

"Give me this handkerchief, Amandine; and yours, too, François."

The little girl took off her head-dress, gave a last look at the large bow, which was not untied, and gave the handkerchief to Martial, repressing a sigh of regret. François drew his slowly out of his pocket, and then gave it to his brother, as his sister had done.

"To-morrow morning," he said, "I will return these handkerchiefs to Nicholas. You ought not to have taken them, children. To profit by a robbery is as if one robbed oneself."

"It is a pity those handkerchiefs were so pretty!" said François.

"When you have learned a trade, and earn money by your work, you will buy some as good. Go to bed, my dears, — it is very late."

"You are not angry, brother?" said Amandine, timidly.

"No, no, my love, it is not your fault. You live with ill-disposed persons, and you do as they do unconsciously. When you are with honest persons, you will do as they do; and you'll soon be with such, or the devil's in it. So now, good night!"

"Good night, brother!"

Martial kissed the children. They were now alone.

"What's the matter with you, François, — you seem very sorrowful!" said Amandine.

"Why, brother has taken my nice handkerchief; and besides, didn't you hear what he said?"

"What?"

"He means to take us with him, and put us apprentice."

"And ain't you glad?"

"*Ma foi*, no!"

"Would you rather stay here and be beaten every day?"

"Why, if I am beaten I am not made to work. I am all day in the boat, fishing, or playing, or waiting on the customers, who sometimes give me something, as the stout lame man did. It is much more amusing than to be from morning till night shut up in a workshop working like a dog."

"But didn't you understand? Why, brother said that if we remained here longer we should become evil-disposed."

"Ah! bah! That's all one to me, since the other children call us already little thieves, — little guillotines! And then to work is too tiresome!"

"But here they are always beating us, brother!"

"They beat us because we listen to Martial more than to any one else."

"Oh, he is so kind to us!"

"Yes, he is kind, — very kind, — I don't say he ain't;

and I am very fond of him. No one dares to be unkind to us when he is by. He takes us out with him, — that's true; but that's all; he never gives us anything."

"Why, he has nothing. What he gains he gives our mother to pay for his eating, drinking, and lodging."

"Nicholas has something. You may be sure if we attend to what he and mother say, they would not make our lives so uncomfortable, but give us pretty things, as they did to-day. They would not distrust us, and we should have money like Tortillard."

"But we must steal for that; and how that would grieve dear, good Martial!"

"Well, so much the worse!"

"Oh, François! And then we should be taken up and put into prison."

"To be in a prison or shut up in a workshop all day is the same thing. Besides, the Gros-Boiteux says they amuse themselves very much in prison."

"But how sorry Martial would be; only think of that! And then it is on our account that he returned here, and remains with us! For himself only he would not have any difficulty, but could go again and be a poacher in the woods which he is so very fond of."

"Oh, if he'll take us with him into the woods," said François, "that would be better than anything else. I should be with him I am so fond of, and should not work at any business that would tire me."

The conversation of François and Amandine was interrupted. Some one outside double-locked their door.

"They have fastened us in," said François.

"Oh, what can it be for, brother? What are they going to do to us?"

"It is Martial, perhaps."

"Listen, listen, — how his dog barks!" said Amandine, listening.

After a few minutes, François added:

"It sounds as if some one were knocking at his door with a hammer. Perhaps they want to force it open!"

"Yes; but how the dog barks still!"

"Listen, François! It is as if they were nailing something. Oh, dear, oh, dear, how frightened I am! What are they doing to our brother? And how the dog howls still!"

"Amandine, I hear nothing now," said François, going towards the door.

The two children held their breath, and listened anxiously.

"They are coming from my brother's room," said François, in a low voice; "I hear them walking in the passage."

"Let us throw ourselves on our beds; mother would kill us if she found us out of bed," said Amandine, terrified.

"No," said François, still listening; "they have just passed by our door, and are running down the staircase."

"Oh, dear, oh, dear, what can it be?"

"Ah, now they are opening the kitchen door."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, yes; I know the sound."

"Martial's dog is still howling," said Amandine, listening. Suddenly she exclaimed, "François, our brother calls us."

"Martial?"

"Yes; don't you hear him? Don't you hear him now?"

And at this moment, in spite of the thickness of the two closed doors, the powerful voice of Martial, who called to the children from his room, reached them.

"Indeed, we can't go to him; we are locked in," said Amandine. "They must be doing something wrong to him, as he calls us."

"Oh, as to that, if I could hinder them," exclaimed

François, resolutely, "I would, even if they were to cut me to pieces!"

"But our brother does not know that they have double-locked our door, and he will believe that we would not go to his help. Call out to him that we are locked in, François."

The lad was just going to do as his sister bade him, when a violent blow was struck outside the shutter of the window of the room in which the two children were.

"They are coming in by the window to kill us!" cried Amandine, and, in her fright, she threw herself on her bed and hid her head between her hands.

François remained motionless, although he shared his sister's terror. However, after the violent blow we have mentioned, the shutter was not opened, and the most profound silence reigned throughout the house. Martial had ceased calling to the children.

A little assured, and excited by intense curiosity, François ventured to open the window a little way, and tried to look out through the leaves of the blind.

"Mind, brother!" said Amandine, in a low voice, and sitting up when she heard François open the shutter.

"Can you see anything?" she added.

"No, the night is too dark."

"Don't you hear anything?"

"No, the wind is too high."

"Come in, then; come in."

"Oh, now I see something!"

"What?"

"The light of a lantern, which moves backwards and forwards."

"Who's carrying it?"

"I can only see the light. Ah, she comes nearer,—she is speaking!"

"Who?"

"Listen,—listen! It is Calabash."

"What does she say?"

"She says the ladder must be fixed securely."

"Oh, it was then in taking away the high ladder that was placed against our shutter that they made that noise just now."

"I don't hear anything now."

"What have they done with the ladder?"

"I can't see it now."

"Can you hear anything?"

"No."

"François, perhaps they are going to use it to enter our Brother Martial's room by the window!"

"Very likely."

"If you could open our window a little more you might see."

"I am afraid."

"Only a little bit."

"Oh, no, no! If mother saw us!"

"It is so dark, there is no danger."

François, much against his will, did as his sister requested, and pushing the shutter back, looked out.

"Well, brother?" said Amandine, surmounting her fears, and approaching François on tiptoe.

"By the gleam of the lantern," said he, "I see Calabash, who is holding the foot of the ladder, which is resting against Martial's window."

"Well?"

"Nicholas is going up the ladder with his axe in his hand. I see it glitter."

"Ah, you are not in bed, then, but watching us!" exclaimed the widow, addressing François and his sister from outside. As she was returning to the kitchen she saw the light, which escaped through the open window.

The unfortunate children had neglected putting out the lantern.

"I am coming," added the widow, in a terrible voice; "I am coming to you, you little spies!"

Such were the events which passed in the Isle du Ravageur on the evening of the day before that on which Madame Séraphin was to take Fleur-de-Marie thither.

CHAPTER VII.

A LODGING-HOUSE.

The Passage de la Brasserie, a dark street, narrow, and but little known, although situated in the centre of Paris, runs at one end into the Rue Traversière St. Honoré, and at the other into the Cour St. Guillaume.

Towards the middle of this damp thoroughfare, muddy, dark, and unwholesome, and where the sun but rarely penetrates, there was a furnished house (commonly called a *garni*, lodging-house, in consequence of the low price of the apartments). On a miserable piece of paper might be read, "Chambers and small rooms furnished." To the right hand, in a dark alley, was the door of a store, not less obscure, in which constantly resided the principal tenant of this *garni*.

Father Micou was ostensibly a dealer in old metal ("marine stores"), but secretly purchased and received stolen metal, iron, lead, brass, and tin. When we mention that Father Micou was connected in business and friendship with the Martial family, we give a tolerable idea of his morality. The tie that binds — the sort of affiliation, the mysterious communion, which connects — the malefactors of Paris, is at once curious and fearful. The common prisons are the great centres whence flow, and to which reflow, incessantly those waves of corruption which gradually gain on the capital, and leave there such pernicious waifs and strays.

Father Micou was a stout man, about fifty years of age, with a mean and cunning countenance, a mulberry

nose, and wine-flushed cheeks. He wore a fur cap and an old green long-skirted coat. Over his small stove, near which he was standing, there was a board fastened to the wall, and bearing a row of figures, to which were affixed the keys of the chambers of the absent lodgers. The panes of glass in the door which opened on to the street were so painted that from the outside no one could see what was going on within.

The whole of this extensive store was very dark. From the damp walls there hung rusty chains of all sizes; and the floor was strewed with iron and other metals. Three blows struck at the door in a particular way attracted the attention of the landlord, huckster, receiver.

"Come in!" he cried.

It was Nicholas, the son of the felon's widow. He was very pale, his features looked even more evil than they did on the previous evening, and yet he feigned a kind of overgaiety during the following conversation. (This scene takes place on the day after his quarrel with Martial.)

"Ah, is it you, my fine fellow?" said Micou, cordially.

"Yes, Father Micou, I have come to see you on a trifle of business."

"Then shut the door, — shut the door."

"My dog and cart are there outside with the stuff."

"What do you bring me, double tripe (sheet lead)?"

"No, Father Micou."

"What is it, scrapings? but no, you're too downy now, you've left off work. Perhaps it is a bit of hard (iron)?"

"No, Daddy Micou, it's some flap (sheet copper). There must be, at least, a hundred and fifty pounds weight, as much as my dog could stagger along with."

"Go and fetch the flap, and let's weigh it."

"You must lend a hand, daddy, for I've hurt my arm."

And, at the recollection of his contest with his brother Martial, the ruffian's features expressed, at once, the resentment of hatred and savage joy, as if his vengeance were already satisfied.

"What's the matter with your arm, my man?"

"Nothing, — only a sprain."

"You must heat an iron in the fire, and plunge it red-hot into the water, then put your arm in the water as hot as you can bear it. It is an iron-dealer's remedy, but none the worse for that."

"Thank ye, Father Micou."

"Go and fetch the flap, and I'll come and help you, idle-bones."

At twice the copper was brought out of the cart, drawn by an enormous dog, and conveyed into the shop.

"That cart of yours is a good idea," said the worthy Micou, as he adjusted the wooden frames of an enormous pair of scales that hung from a beam in the ceiling.

"Yes; when I've anything to bring, I put my dog and cart into the punt, and harness them as we come along. A hackney-coach might, perhaps, tell a tale, but my dog never chatters."

"And they're all pretty well at home, — eh?" inquired the receiver, weighing the copper; "mother and sister, both pretty bobbish?"

"Yes, Father Micou."

"And the little uns?"

"Yes, the little uns, too. And your nephew, André, where is he?"

"Don't mention him; he was out on a spree yesterday. Barbillon and Gros-Boiteux brought him back this morning. He is out for a walk now towards the General Post-office in the Rue St. Jacques Rousseau. And your brother, Martial, is he just such a rum un as ever?"

"*Ma foi!* I don't know."

"Don't know?"

"No," replied Nicholas, assuming an indifferent air;

"we have seen nothing of him for the last two days. Perhaps he's gone poaching in the woods again; unless his boat, which was very, very old, has sunk in the river, with him in it."

"At which you would not be dreadfully affected, you bad lot, for you can't bear your brother, I know."

"True; we have strange likes and dislikes. How many pounds of metal d'ye make?"

"You're right to a hair, just a hundred and fifty pounds, my lad."

"And you owe me —"

"Just thirty francs."

"Thirty francs! when copper is twenty sous a pound? Thirty francs!"

"Say thirty-five francs, and there's an end of the matter, or go to the devil with you! you, and your copper, and your dog, and your cart."

"But, Father Micou, you are really chiselling me down; that's not the right thing by no means."

"If you'll tell me how you came by your copper, I'll give you fifteen sous a pound for it."

"That's the old strain. You are all alike, a regular lot of cheats. How can you bear to 'do' your friends in this way? But that's not all; if I swap with you for some things, you ought to give me good measure."

"To a hair's turn. What do you want? Chains and hooks for your punts?"

"No, I want four or five sheets of stout iron, as if to line shutters with."

"I've just the thing, a quarter of an inch thick; a pistol-ball wouldn't go through it."

"Just what I want."

"What size?"

"Why, altogether about seven or eight feet square."

"Good, and what else?"

"Three bars of iron, from three to four feet long, and two inches square."

"I have just broken up an iron wicket; nothing can be better for you. What next?"

"Two strong hinges and a latch, so that I can open or shut an opening two feet square when I wish."

"A trap, you mean?"

"No, a valve."

"I don't understand what you can want with a valve."

"Never you mind; I know what I want."

"That's all right; you have only to choose; there's a heap of hinges. What's the next thing?"

"That's all."

"And not much, either."

"Get it all ready, Father Micou, and I'll take it as I come back; for I've got some other places to call at."

"With your cart? Why, you dog, I saw a bundle underneath. What, some little trifle you have taken from the world's wardrobe? Ah, you sly rogue!"

"Just as you say, Father Micou; but you don't deal in such things. Don't keep me waiting for the iron goods, for I must be back at the island before noon."

"I'll be ready. It is only eight, and, if you are not going far, come back in an hour, and you shall find everything prepared, — money and goods. Won't you take a drain?"

"Thank ye, I won't say no, for I think you owe it me."

Father Micou took from an old closet a bottle of brandy, a cracked glass, and a cup without a handle, and filled them.

"Here's to you, Daddy Micou!"

"And to you likewise, my boy, and the ladies at home!"

"Thank ye. And the lodging-house goes on well, eh?"

"Middling, — middling. I have always some lodgers for whom I am always fearing a visit from the commissary; but they pay in proportion."

"How d'ye mean?"

"Why, are you stupid? I sometimes lodge as I buy, and don't ask them for their passport, any more than I ask you for your bill of parcels."

"Good; but to them you let as dear as you have bought cheaply of me."

"I must look out. I have a cousin who has a handsome furnished house in the Rue St. Honoré. His wife is a milliner in a large way, and employs, perhaps, twenty needlewomen, either in the house, or having the work at home."

"I say, old boy, I dare say there's some pretty uns among 'em?"

"I believe you. There's two or three that I have seen bring home work sometimes, — my eyes, ain't they pretty, though? One little one in particular, who works at home, and is always a-laughing, and they calls her Rigolette, oh, my pippin, what a pity one ain't twenty years old all over again!"

"Halloa, daddy, how you are going it!"

"Oh, it's all right, my boy, — all right!"

"'Walker!' old boy. And you say your cousin —"

"Does uncommon well with his house, and, as it is the same number as that of the little Rigolette —"

"What, again?"

"Oh, it's all right and proper."

"'Walker!'"

"He won't have any lodgers but those who have passports and papers; but if any come who haven't got 'em, he sends me those customers."

"And they pays accordingly?"

"In course."

"But they are all in our line who haven't got their riglar papers?"

"By no manner of means! Why, very lately, my cousin sent me a customer, — devil burn me if I can make him out! Another drain?"

"Just one; the liquor's good. Here's t'ye again, Daddy Micou!"

"Here's to you again, my covey! I was saying that the other day my cousin sent me a customer whom I can't make out. Imagine a mother and daughter, who looked very queer and uncommon seedy; they had their whole kit in a pocket-handkerchief. Well, there warn't much to be expected out of this, for they had no papers, and they lodge by the fortnight; yet, since they've been here, they haven't moved any more than a dormouse. No men come to see them; and yet they're not bad-looking, if they weren't so thin and pale, particularly the daughter, about sixteen, — with such a pair of black eyes, — oh, such eyes!"

"Halloa, dad! You're off again. What do these women do?"

"I tell you I don't know; they must be respectable, and yet, as they receive letters without any address, it looks queer."

"What do you mean?"

"They sent, this morning, my nephew André to the *Poste-Restante* to inquire for a letter addressed to 'Madame X. Z.' The letter was expected from Normandy, from a town called Aubiers. They wrote that down on paper, so that André might get the letter by giving these particulars. You see, it does not look quite the thing for women to take the name of 'X.' and 'Z.' And yet they never have any male visitors."

"They won't pay you."

"Oh, my fine fellow, they don't catch an old bird like me with chaff. They took a room without a fireplace, and I made them pay the twenty francs down for the fortnight. They are, perhaps, ill, for they have not been down for the last two days. It is not indigestion

that ails them, for I don't think they have cooked anything since they came here."

"If you had all such customers, Father Micou —"

"Oh, they go and come. If I lodge people without passports, why, I also have different people. I have now two travelling gents, a postman, the leader of the band at the Café des Aveugles, and a lady of fortune, — all most respectable persons, such as save the reputation of a house, if the commissary is inclined to look a little too closely into things; they are not night-lodgers, but tenants of the broad sunshine."

"When it comes into your alley, Father Micou."

"You're a wag. Another drain, yes, just one more."

"Well, it must be my last, for then I must cut. By the way, doesn't Robin, the Gros-Boiteux, lodge here still?"

"Yes, up-stairs, on the same landing as the mother and daughter. He's pretty nearly run through his money he earned in gaol."

"I say, mind your eye, — he's outlawed."

"I know it, but I can't get rid of him. I think he's got something in hand, for little Tortillard came here the other night along with Barbillon. I'm afraid he'll do something to my lodgers, so, when his fortnight is up, I shall bundle him, telling him his room is taken for an ambassador, or the husband of Madame Saint-Ildefonse, my independent lady."

"An independent lady?"

"I believe you! Three rooms and a cabinet in the front, — nothing less, — newly furnished, to say nothing of an attic for her servant. Eighty francs a month, and paid in advance by her uncle, to whom she gives one of her spare rooms when he comes up from the country. But I believe his country-house is about the Rue Vivienne, or the Rue St. Honoré."

"I twig! She's independent because the old fellow pays."

"Hush! Here's her maid."

A middle-aged woman, wearing a white apron of very doubtful cleanliness, entered the dealer's warehouse.

"What can I do for you, Madame Charles?"

"Father Micou, is your nephew within?"

"He has gone to the post-office; but I expect him in immediately."

"M. Badinot wishes him to take this letter to its address instantly. There's no answer, but it is in great haste."

"In a quarter of an hour he will be on his way thither, madame."

"He must make great haste."

"He shall, be assured."

The servant went away.

"Is she the maid of one of your lodgers, Father Micou?"

"She is the *bonne* of my independent lady, Madame Saint-Ildefonse. But M. Badinot is her uncle; he came from the country yesterday," said the respectable Micou, who was looking at the letter, and then added, reading the address, "Look, now, what grand acquaintances! Why, I told you they were high folks; he writes to a viscount."

"Oh, bah!"

"See here, then, 'To Monsieur the Vicomte de Saint-Remy, Rue de Chaillot. In great haste. Private.' I hope, when we lodge independent persons who have uncles who write to viscounts, we may allow some few of our other lodgers higher up in the house to be without passports, eh?"

"I believe you. Well, then, Father Micou, we shall soon be back. I shall fasten my dog and cart to your door, and carry what I have; so be ready with the goods and the money, so that I may cut at once."

"I'll be ready. Four good iron plates, each two feet

square, three bars of iron two feet long, and two hinges for your valve. This valve seems very odd to me; but it's no affair of mine. Is that all?"

"Yes, and my money?"

"Oh, you shall have your money. But now I look at you in the light — now I get a good view of you —"

"Well?"

"I don't know — but you seem as if something was the matter."

"I do?"

"Yes."

"Oh, nonsense! If anything ails me it is that I'm hungry."

"You're hungry? Like enough; but it rather looks as if you wanted to appear very lively, whilst all the while there's something that worries you; and it must be *something*, for it ain't a trifle that puts you out."

"I tell you you're mistaken, Father Micou," said Nicholas, shuddering.

"Why, you quite tremble!"

"It's my arm that pains me."

"Well, don't forget my prescription, that will cure you."

"Thank ye, I'll soon be back." And the ruffian went on his way.

The receiver, after having concealed the lumps of copper behind his counter, occupied himself in collecting the various things which Nicholas had requested, when another individual entered his shop. It was a man about fifty years of age, with a keen, sagacious face, a thick pair of gray whiskers, and gold spectacles. He was extremely well dressed; the wide sleeves of his brown paletot, with black velvet cuffs, showing his hands covered with thin coloured kid gloves, and his boots bore evidence of having been on the previous evening highly polished.

It was M. Badinot, the independent lady's uncle, that Madame Saint-Ildefonse, whose social position formed the pride and security of Père Micou. The reader may, perchance, recollect that M. Badinot, the former attorney, struck off that respectable list, then a Chevalier d'Industrie, and agent in equivocal matters, was the spy of Baron de Graün, and had given that diplomatist many and very precise particulars as to many personages connected with this tale.

"Madame Charles has just given you a letter to send?" said M. Badinot, to the dealer in *et ceteras.*

"Yes, sir; my nephew I expect every moment, and he shall go directly."

"No, give me the letter again, I have changed my mind. I shall go myself to the Comte de Saint-Remy," said M. Badinot, pronouncing this aristocratic name very emphatically, and with much importance.

"Here's the letter, sir; have you any other commission?"

"No, Père Micou," said M. Badinot, with a protecting air, "but I have something to scold you about."

"Me, sir?"

"Very much, indeed."

"About what, sir?"

"Why, Madame de Saint-Ildefonse pays very expensively for your first floor. My niece is a lodger to whom the greatest respect ought to be paid; she came highly recommended to your house, and, having a great aversion to the noise of carriages, she hoped she should be here as if she were in the country."

"So she is; it is quite like a village here. You ought to know, sir, — you who live in the country, — this is a real village."

"A village! Very like, indeed! Why, there is always such an infernal din in the house."

"Still, it is impossible to find a quieter house. Above the lady, there is the leader of the band at the Café des

Aveugles, and a gentleman traveller; over that, another traveller; over that — "

"I am not alluding to those persons; they are very quiet, and appear very respectable. My niece has no fault to find with them; but in the fourth, there is a stout lame man, whom Madame de Saint-Ildefonse met yesterday tipsy on the stairs; he was shrieking like a savage, and she nearly had a fit, she was so much alarmed. If you think that, with such lodgers, your house resembles a village — "

"Sir, I assure you I only wait the opportunity to turn this stout lame man out-of-doors; he has paid his last fortnight in advance, otherwise I should already have turned him out."

"You should not have taken in such a lodger."

"But, except him, I hope madame has nothing to complain of. There is a twopenny postman, who is the cream of honest fellows, and overhead, beside the chamber of the stout lame man, a lady and daughter, who do not move any more than dormice."

"I repeat, Madame de Saint-Ildefonse only complains of this stout lame man, who is the nightmare of the house; and I warn you that, if you keep such a fellow in your house, you will find all your respectable lodgers leave you."

"I will send him away, you may be assured. I have no wish to keep him."

"You will only do what's right, for else your house will be forsaken."

"Which will not answer my purpose at all; so, sir, consider the stout lame man as gone, for he has only four more days to stay here."

"Which is four days too many; but it is your affair. At the first outbreak, my niece leaves your house."

"Be assured, sir — "

"It is all for your own interest, — and look to it, for I

am not a man of many words," said M. Badinot, with a patronising air, and he went out.

Need we say that this female and her young daughter, who lived so lonely, were the two victims of the notary's cupidity? We will now conduct the reader to the miserable retreat in which they lived.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VICTIMS OF MISPLACED CONFIDENCE.[1]

Let the reader picture to himself a small chamber on the fourth floor of the wretched house in the Passage de la Brasserie. Scarcely could the faint glimmers of early morn force their pale rays through the narrow casements forming the only window to this small apartment; the three panes of glass that apology for a window contained were cracked and almost the colour of horn, a dingy and torn yellow paper adhered in some places to the walls, while from each corner of the cracked ceiling hung long and thick cobwebs; and to complete the appearance of wretchedness so evident in this forlorn spot, the flooring was broken away, and, in many places, displayed the beams which supported it, as well as the lath and plaster forming the ceiling of the room beneath. A deal table, a chair, an old trunk, without hinges or lock, a truckle-bed, with a wooden headboard, covered by a thin mattress, coarse sheets of unbleached cloth, and an old rug, — such was the entire furniture of this wretched chamber.

On the chair sat the Baroness de Fermont, and in the bed reposed her daughter, Claire de Fermont. Such were the names of these two victims of the villainy of Jacques Ferrand. Possessing but one bed, the mother and child took it by turns to sleep. Too much uneasiness and too many bitter cares prevented Madame de Fermont from

[1] "The average punishment awarded to such as are convicted of breach of trust is two months' imprisonment and a fine of twenty-five francs." — *Art.* 406 *and* 408 *of the* "*Code Penal.*"

enjoying the blessing of repose; but her daughter's young and elastic nature easily yielded to the natural impulse which made her willingly seek in short slumbers a temporary respite from the misery by which she was surrounded during her waking hours. At the present moment she was sleeping peacefully.

Nothing could be imagined more touchingly affecting than the picture of misery imposed by the avarice of the notary on two females hitherto accustomed to every comfort, and surrounded in their native city by that respect which is ever felt for honourable and honoured families.

Madame de Fermont was about six and thirty years of age, with a countenance at once expressive of gentleness and intelligence, mingled with an indescribably noble and majestic air. Her features, which had once boasted extreme beauty, were now pale and careworn; her dark hair was separated on her forehead, and formed two thick, lustrous bandeaux, which, after shading her pallid countenance, were twisted in with her back hair, whose tresses the hand of sorrow had already mingled with gray. Dressed in an old shabby black dress, patched and pieced in various places, Madame de Fermont, her head supported by her hand, was surveying her child with looks of ineffable tenderness.

Claire was but sixteen years of age, and her gentle and innocent countenance, thin and sorrowful as that of her mother, looked still more pallid as contrasted with the coarse, unbleached linen which covered her bolster, filled only with sawdust. The once brilliant complexion of the poor girl had sickened beneath the privations she endured; and, as she slept, the long, dark lashes which fringed her large and lustrous eyes stood out almost unnaturally upon her sunken cheek; the once fresh and rosy lips were now dry, cracked, and colourless, yet, half opened as they were, they displayed the faultless regularity of her pearly teeth.

The harsh contact of the rough linen which covered

her bed had caused a temporary redness about the neck, shoulders, and arms of the poor girl, whose fine and delicate skin was marbled and spotted by the friction both of the miserable sheets and rug. A sensation of uneasiness and discomfort seemed to pervade even her slumbers; for the clearly defined eyebrows, occasionally contracted, as though the sleeper were under the influence of an uneasy dream, and the pained expression observable on the features, foretold the deadly nature of the disease at work within.

Madame de Fermont had long ceased to find relief in tears, but, like her suffering daughter, she found that weakness, languor, and dejection, which is ever the precursor of severe illness, rapidly and daily increasing; but, unwilling to alarm Claire, and wishing, if possible, even to conceal the frightful truth from herself, the wretched mother struggled against the first approaches of her malady, while, from a similar feeling of devotion and affection, Claire sought to hide from her parent the extreme suffering she herself experienced.

To attempt to describe the tortures endured by the tender mother, as, during the greater part of the night, she watched her slumbering child, her thoughts alternately dwelling on the past, the present, and the future, would be to paint the sharpest, bitterest, wildest agony that ever crossed the brain of a loving and despairing mother; to give alternately her reminiscences of bygone happiness, her shuddering dread of impending evil, her fearful anticipations, her bitter regrets, and utter despondency, mingled with bursts of frenzied rage against the author of all her sorrows, vain supplications, eager, earnest prayers, ending at last fearfully and dreadfully in openly expressed mistrust of the omnipotence and justice of the Great Being who could thus remain insensible to the cry which arose from a mother's breaking heart, to that holy plea whose sound should reach the throne of grace, — "Pity, pity, for my child!"

"How cold she is!" cried the poor mother, lightly touching with her icy hand the equally chill arm of her child; "how very, very cold! and scarcely an hour ago just as hot! Alas, 'tis the cruel fever which has seized upon her! Happily the dear creature is as yet unconscious of her malady! Gracious heaven, she is becoming cold as death itself! What shall I do to bring warmth to her poor frame? The bed-coverings are so slight! A good thought! I will throw my old shawl over her. But no, no! I dare not remove it from the door over which I have hung it, lest those men so brutally intoxicated should endeavour, as they did yesterday, to look into the room through the disjointed panels or openings in the framework.

"What a horrible place we have got into! Oh, if I had but known by what description of persons it was inhabited before I paid the fortnight in advance! Certainly, we would not have remained here. But, alas, I knew it not; and when we have no vouchers for our respectability, it is so difficult to obtain furnished lodgings. Who could ever have thought I should have been at a loss, — I who quitted Angers in my own carriage, deeming it unfit my daughter should travel by any public conveyance? How could I have imagined that I should experience any difficulty in obtaining every requisite testimonial of my honour and honesty?"

Then bursting into a fit of anger, she exclaimed, "'Tis too, too hard, that because this unprincipled, hard-hearted notary chooses to strip us of all our possessions, I have no means of punishing him! Yes; had I money I might sue him legally for his misconduct. But would not that be to bring obloquy and contempt on the memory of my good, my noble-minded brother; to have it publicly proclaimed that he consummated his ruin by taking away his own life, after having squandered my fortune and that of my child; to hear him accused of reducing us to want and wretch-

edness? Oh, never, — never! Still, however dear and sacred is the memory of a brother, should not the welfare of my child be equally so?

"And wherefore, too, should I give rise to useless tales of family misery, unprovided as I am with any proofs against the notary? Oh, it is, indeed, a cruel, — a most cruel case. Sometimes, too, when irritated, goaded by my reflections almost to madness, I find myself indulging in bitter plaints against my brother, and think his conduct more culpable than even the notary's, as though it were any alleviation of my woes to have two names to execrate instead of one. But quickly do I blush at my own base and unworthy suspicions of one so good, so honourable, so noble-minded as my poor brother! This infamous notary knows not all the fearful consequences of his dishonesty. He fancies he has but taken from us our worldly goods, while he has plunged a dagger in the hearts of two innocent, unoffending victims, condemned by his villainy to die by inches. Alas, I dare not breathe into the ear of my poor child the full extent of my fears, lest her young mind should be unable to support the blow!

"But I am ill, — very, very ill; a burning fever is in my veins; and 'tis only with the greatest energy and resolution I contrive to resist its approaches. But too certainly do I feel aware that the germs of a possibly mortal disease are in me. I am aware of its gaining ground hourly. My throat is parched, my head burns and throbs with racking pains. These symptoms are even more dangerous than I am willing to own even to myself. Merciful God! If I were to be ill, — seriously, fatally ill, — if I should die! But no, no!" almost shrieked Madame Fermont, with wild excitement; "I cannot, — I will not die! To leave Claire at sixteen years of age, alone, and without resource, in the midst of Paris! Impossible! Oh, no, I am not ill; I have mistaken the effects of sorrow, cold, and want of rest,

for the precursory symptoms of illness. Any person similarly placed would have experienced the same. It is nothing, nothing worth noticing. There must be no weakness on my part. 'Tis by yielding to such dismal anticipations that one becomes really attacked by the very malady we dread. And besides, I have not time to be ill. Oh, no! On the contrary, I must immediately exert myself to find employment for Claire and myself, since the wretch who gave us the prints to colour has dared to — "

After a short silence, Madame de Fermont, leaving her last sentence unfinished, indignantly added:

"Horrible idea! To ask the shame of my child in return for the work he doles out to us, and to harshly withdraw it because I will not suffer my poor Claire to go to his house unaccompanied, and work there during the evening alone with him! Possibly I may succeed in obtaining work elsewhere, either in plain or ornamental needlework. Yet it is so very difficult when we are known to no one; and very recently I tried in vain. Persons are afraid of entrusting their materials to those who live in such wretched lodgings as ours. And yet I dare not venture upon others more creditable; for what would become of us were the small sum we possess once exhausted? What could we do? We should be utterly penniless; as destitute as the veriest beggar that ever walked the earth.

"And then to think I once was among the richest and wealthiest! Oh, let me not think of what has been; such considerations serve but to increase the already excited state of my brain. It will madden me to recollect the past; and I am wrong — oh, very wrong — thus to dwell on ideas that sadden and depress instead of raising and invigorating my enfeebled mind. Had I gone on thus weakly indulging regrets, I might, indeed, have fallen ill, — for I am by no means so at present. No, no," continued the unfortunate parent, placing her

fingers upon the wrist of her left hand, "my fever has left me, — my pulse beats tranquilly."

Alas! the quick, irregular, and hurried pulsation perceptible beneath the parched yet icy skin allowed not of such flattering hopes; and, after pausing in deep and heartfelt wretchedness for a short space, the unhappy Madame de Fermont thus continued:

"Wherefore, O God of Mercies, thus visit with thine anger two wretched and helpless creatures, utterly unconscious of having merited thy displeasure? What has been the crime that has thus drawn down such heavy punishments upon our heads? Was not my child a model of innocent piety, as her father was of honour? Have I not ever scrupulously fulfilled my duties both as wife and mother? Why, then, permit us to become the victims of a vile, ignoble wretch, — my sweet, my innocent child more especially? Oh, when I remember that, but for the nefarious conduct of this notary, the rising dawn of my daughter's existence would have been clear and unclouded, I can scarcely restrain my tears. But for his base treachery we should now be in our own home, without further care or sorrow than such as arose from the painful and unhappy circumstances attending the death of my poor brother. In two or three years' time I should have begun to think of marrying my sweet Claire, that is, if I could have found any one worthy of so good, so pure-minded, and so lovely a creature as herself. Who would not have rejoiced in obtaining such a bride? And further, after having merely reserved to myself a trifling annuity, sufficient to have enabled me to live somewhere in the neighbourhood, I intended, on her marriage, to bestow on her the whole of my remaining possessions, amounting to at least one hundred thousand crowns; for I should have been enabled to lay by something. And, when a lovely and beautiful young creature, like my Claire, gifted with all the advantages of a superior education, can, in addition,

boast of a dowry of more than one hundred thousand crowns — "

Then, as she again returned to the realities of her present position, altogether overcome by the painful contrast, Madame de Fermont exclaimed, almost frantically:

"Still, it is not to be supposed that, because the notary so wills it, I shall sit tamely by and see my only and beloved child reduced to the most abject misery, entitled as she is to a life of the most unalloyed felicity. If I can obtain no redress from the laws of my country, I will not permit the infamous conduct of this man to escape unpunished. For if I am driven to desperation, if I find no means of extricating my daughter and myself from the deplorable condition to which the villainy of this man has brought us, I cannot answer for myself, or what I may do. I may be driven by madness to retaliate on this man, even by taking his life. And what if I did, after all I have endured, after all the scalding tears he has caused me to shed, who could blame me? At least I should be secure of the pity and sympathy of all mothers who loved their children as I do my Claire. Yes; but, then, what would be her position, — left alone, friendless, unexperienced, and destitute? Oh, no, no, that is my principal dread; therefore do I fear to die.

"And for that same reason dare I not harm the traitor who has wrought our ruin. What would become of her at sixteen? — pure and spotless as an angel, 'tis true. But then she is so surpassingly lovely; and want, desolation, cold, and misery are fearful things to oppose alone and unaided. How fearful a conflict might be presented to one of her tender years, and into how terrible an abyss might she not fall? Oh, want, — fatal word! As I trace it, a crowd of sickening images rise before me, and distract my senses. Destitution, dreadful as it is to all, is still more formidable to those who have lived surrounded not only with every comfort, but even luxury.

One thing I cannot pardon myself for, and that is that, in the face of all these overwhelming trials, I have not yet been able to subdue my unfortunate pride; and I feel persuaded that nothing but the sight of my child, actually perishing before my eyes for want of bread, could induce me to beg. How weak, how selfish and cowardly! Still —"

Then, as her thoughts wandered to the source of all her present sufferings and anguish, she mournfully continued:

"The notary has reduced me to a state of beggary; I must, therefore, yield to the stern necessity of my situation. There must be an end of all delicacy as well as scruples. They might have been well enough in bygone days; but my duty is now to stretch forth my hand to solicit charitable aid for both my daughter and myself. And if I fail in procuring work, I must make up my mind to implore the charity of my fellow creatures, since the roguery of the notary has left me no alternative. Doubtless in that, as in other trades, there is an art, an expertness to be acquired, and which experience alone can bestow. Never mind," continued she, with a sort of feverish wildness, "one must learn one's craft, and only practice can make perfect. Surely mine must be a tale to move even the most unfeeling. I have to tell of misfortunes alike severe and unmerited, — of an angelic child, but sixteen years of age, exposed to every evil of life. But then it requires a practised hand to set forth all these qualifications, so as best to excite sympathy and compassion. No matter; I shall manage it, I feel quite sure. And, after all," exclaimed the half distracted woman, with a gloomy smile, "what have I so much to complain of? Fortune is perishable and precarious; and the notary will, at least, if he has taken my money, have compelled me to adopt a trade."

For several minutes Madame de Fermont remained absorbed in her reflections, then resumed more calmly:

"I have frequently thought of inquiring for some situation. What I seem to covet is just such a place as a female has here who is servant to a lady living on the first floor. Had I that situation I might probably receive wages sufficient to maintain Claire; and I might even, through the intervention of the mistress I served, be enabled to obtain occupation for my daughter, who then would remain here. Neither should I be obliged to quit her. Oh, what joy, could it be so arranged! But no, no, that would be happiness too great for me to expect; it would seem like a dream. And then, again, if I obtained the place, the poor woman now occupying it must be turned away. Possibly she is as poor and destitute as ourselves. Well, what if she be? No scruple has arisen to save us from being stripped of our all, and my child's preservation outweighs all fastidious notions of delicacy in my breast. The only difficulty consists in obtaining an introduction to the lady on the first floor, and contriving to dispossess the servant of a place which would be to me the very perfection of ease and comfort."

Several loud and hasty knocks at the door startled Madame de Fermont, and made her daughter spring up with a sudden cry.

"For heaven's sake, dear mother," asked poor Claire, trembling with fear, "what is the matter?" And then, without giving her agitated parent time to recover herself, the terrified girl threw her arms around her mother's neck, as if she sought for safety in that fond, maternal bosom, while Madame de Fermont, pressing her child almost convulsively to her breast, gazed with terror at the door.

"Mamma, mamma," again moaned Claire, "what was that noise that awoke me? And why do you seem so much alarmed?"

"I know not, my child, what it was. But calm yourself, there is nothing to fear; some one merely knocked

at the door, — possibly to bring us a letter from the post-office."

At this moment the worm-eaten door shook and rattled beneath the blows dealt against it by some powerful fist.

"Who is there?" inquired Madame de Fermont, in a trembling tone.

A harsh, coarse, and vulgar voice replied, "Holloa, there! What, are you so deaf there's no making you hear? Holloa, I say, open your door; and let's have a look at you. Hip, hip, holloa! Come, sharp's the word; I'm in a hurry."

"I know you not," exclaimed Madame de Fermont, striving to command herself sufficiently to speak with a steady voice; "what is it you seek here?"

"Not know me? Why, I'm your opposite neighbour and fellow lodger, Robin. I want a light for my pipe. Come, cut about. Whoop, holloa! Don't go to sleep again, or I must come in and wake you."

"Merciful heavens!" whispered the mother to her daughter, "'tis that lame man, who is nearly always intoxicated."

"Now, then, are you going to give me a light? Because, I tell you fairly, one I will have if I knock your rickety old door to pieces."

"I have no light to give you."

"Oh, bother and nonsense! If you have no candle burning you must have the means of lighting one. Nobody is without a few lucifer matches, be they ever so poor. Do you or do you not choose to give me a light?"

"I beg of you to go away."

"You don't choose to open your door, then? Once, — twice, — mind, I will have it."

"I request you to quit my door immediately, or I will call for assistance."

"Once, — twice, — thrice, — you will not? Well,

then, here goes! Now I'll smash your old timbers into morsels too small for you to pick up. Hu!—hu!—hallo! Well done! Bravo!"

And suiting the action to the word, the ruffian assailed the door so furiously that he quickly drove it in, the miserable lock with which it was furnished having speedily broken to pieces.

The two women shrieked loudly; Madame de Fermont, in spite of her weakness, rushed forward to meet the ruffian at the moment when he was entering the room, and stopped him.

"Sir, this is most shameful; you must not enter here," exclaimed the unhappy mother, keeping the door closed as well as she could. "I will call for help." And she shuddered at the sight of this man, with his hideous and drunken countenance.

"What's all this? What's all this?" said he. "Oughtn't neighbours to be obliging? You ought to have opened; I shouldn't have broken anything."

Then with the stupid obstinacy of intoxication, he added, reeling on his tottering legs:

"I wanted to come in, and I will come in; and I won't go out until I've lighted my pipe."

"I have neither fire nor matches. In heaven's name, sir, do go away."

"That's not true. You tell me that I may not see the little girl who's in bed. Yesterday you stopped up all the holes in the door. She's a pretty chick, and I should like to see her. So mind, or I shall hurt you if you don't let me enter quietly. I tell you I will see the little girl in her bed, and I will light my pipe, or I'll smash everything before me, and you into the bargain."

"Help, help, help!" exclaimed Madame de Fermont, who felt the door yielding before the broad shoulders of the Gros-Boiteux.

Alarmed by her cries, the man retreated a step; and clenching his fist at Madame de Fermont, he said:

"You shall pay me for this, mind. I will come back to-night and wring your tongue out, and then you can't squall out."

And the Gros-Boiteux, as he was called at the Isle du Ravageur, went down the staircase, uttering horrible threats.

Madame de Fermont, fearing that he might return, and seeing that the lock was broken, dragged the table across the room, in order to barricade it. Claire had been so alarmed, so agitated, at this horrible scene, that she had fallen on her bed almost senseless, and overcome by a nervous attack. Her mother, forgetting her own fears, ran to her, embraced her, gave her a little water to drink, and by her caresses and attentions revived her. When she saw her gradually recovering she said to her:

"Calm yourself; don't be alarmed, my dearest child, this wicked man has gone." Then the unfortunate mother exclaimed, in a tone of indescribable indignation and grief, "And it is that notary who is the first cause of all our sufferings."

Claire looked about her with as much astonishment as fear.

"Take courage, my child," said Madame de Fermont, embracing her tenderly; "the wretch has gone."

"Oh, mamma, if he should come back again! You see, though you cried so loud for help, no one came. Oh, pray let us leave this house, or I shall die with fear!"

"How you tremble; you are quite in a fever."

"No, no," said the young girl, to reassure her mother, "it is nothing — only fright, — and that will soon pass away. And you, — how do you feel? Give me your hands. Oh, how they burn! It is, indeed, you who are suffering; and you try to conceal it from me!"

"Don't think so; I feel better than I did. It is only the fright that man caused me which makes me so. I

was sleeping soundly in my chair, and only awoke when you did."

"Yet, mamma, your poor eyes look so red and inflamed!"

"Why, you see, my dear, one does not sleep so refreshingly in a chair."

"And you really do not suffer?"

"No, no, I assure you. And you?"

"Nor I either. I only tremble with fear. Pray, mamma, let us leave this house!"

"And where shall we go to? You know what trouble we had to find this miserable chamber; for, unfortunately, we have no papers, — and, besides, we have paid a fortnight in advance. They will not return our money; and we have so very, very little left, that we must take all possible care of it."

"Perhaps M. de Saint-Remy will answer you in a day or two."

"I cannot hope for that. It is so long since I wrote to him."

"He cannot have received your letter. Why did not you write to him again? From here to Angers is not so far, and we should soon have his answer."

"My poor child, you know how much that has cost me already!"

"But there's no risk; and he is so good in spite of his roughness. Wasn't he one of the oldest friends of my father? And then he is a relation of ours."

"But he is poor himself, — his fortune is very small. Perhaps he does not reply to us that he may avoid the pain of a refusal."

"But he may not have received your letter, mamma!"

"And if he has received it, my dear, — one of two things, either he is himself in too painful a position to come to our aid, or he feels no interest in us. What, then, is the use of exposing ourselves to a refusal or humiliation?"

"Come, come, courage, mamma; we have still a hope left. Perhaps this very morning will bring us a kind answer."

"From M. d'Orbigny?"

"Yes; the letter of which you had made the rough copy was so simple and touching. It showed our miserable condition so naturally that he will have pity on us. Really, I don't know why, but something tells me you are wrong to despair of him."

"He has so little motive for taking any interest in us. It is true he formerly knew your father, and I have often heard my poor brother speak of M. d'Orbigny as a man with whom he was on good terms before the latter left Paris to retire into the country with his young wife."

"It is that which makes me hope. He has a young wife, and she will be compassionate. And then in the country one can do so much good. He will take you, I should think, as a housekeeper, and I could work in the needle-room. Then M. d'Orbigny is very rich, and in a great house there is always so much to do."

"Yes; but we have so little claim on his kind interest!"

"We are so unfortunate!"

"It is true that is a claim in the eyes of charitably disposed persons."

"Let us hope that M. d'Orbigny and his wife are so."

"Then if we do not have any or an unfavorable answer from him, I will overcome my false shame, and write to the Duchesse de Lucenay."

"The lady of whom M. de Saint-Remy has spoken so often, and whose kindness and generosity he so much praised?"

"The same,—daughter of the Prince de Noirmont. He knew her when she was very young, and treated her almost always as if she were his own child, for he was on terms of the closest intimacy with the prince. Madame

de Lucenay must have many acquaintances, and, no doubt, could easily find situations for us."

"No doubt, mamma. But I understand your delicacy; you do not know her, whilst, at least, my father and my uncle both knew a little of M. d'Orbigny."

"Well, but in case Madame de Lucenay cannot do anything for us, I have still another resource."

"What is that, mamma?"

"A very poor one, — a very weak hope, perhaps. But why should I not try it? M. de Saint-Remy's son is —"

"Has M. de Saint-Remy a son?" exclaimed Claire, interrupting her mother with great astonishment.

"Yes, my dear, he has a son."

"Yet he never spoke of him when he used to come to Angers."

"True, and, for reasons which you cannot understand, M. de Saint-Remy, having quitted Paris fifteen years ago, has not seen his son since that period."

"Fifteen years without seeing his father! Is that possible?"

"Alas, yes! As you see, the son of M. de Saint-Remy, being very much sought after in society, and very rich —"

"Very rich, whilst his father is poor?"

"All young M. de Saint-Remy's wealth came from his mother."

"What of that, — how could he leave his father?"

"His father would not accept anything from him."

"Why?"

"That is a question to which I cannot reply, my dear child; but I have heard it said by my poor brother that this young man was reputed vastly generous. Young and generous, he ought to be good. Learning from me that my husband had been his father's intimate friend, perhaps he will interest himself in trying to find us work or employment. He has such high and extensive connections, that this would be no trouble to him."

"And then, perhaps, too, we could learn from him if M. de Saint-Remy, his father, had not quitted Angers before you wrote to him: that would account for his silence."

"I think, my dear, that M. de Saint-Remy has not kept up any connection with — Still, we cannot but try."

"Unless M. d'Orbigny replies to you favourably, and I repeat, I don't know why, but I have hopes, in spite of myself."

"It is now many days, my dear, since I wrote to him, telling him all the causes of our misfortunes, and yet to this time we have no reply, — none. A letter put in the post before four o'clock in the evening reaches Aubiers next morning, and thus we might have had his answer five days ago."

"Perhaps, before he replies, he is considering in what way he can best be useful to us."

"May Heaven hear thee, my child!"

"It appears to me plain enough, mamma, if he could not do anything for us, he could have written at once, and said so."

"Unless he will do nothing."

"Oh, mamma, is that possible? to refuse to answer us, and leave us in hope for four days — eight days, perhaps; for when one is miserable we always hope."

"Alas, my child, there is sometimes so much indifference for the miseries persons have never known!"

"But your letter —"

"My letter cannot give him any idea of our actual disquietude, our constant sufferings; my letter will not depict to him our unhappy life, our constant humiliations, our existence in this horrid house, — the fright we have but this instant experienced. My letter will not describe the horrible future which is in store for us, if — But, my love, do not let us talk of that. You tremble, — you are cold."

"No, mamma, don't mind me; but tell me, suppose

all fails us, the little money we have in the box is spent, — is it possible that, in a city as rich as Paris, we shall both die of hunger and misery — for want of work, and because a wicked man has taken from you all you had in the world?"

"Oh, be silent, my unfortunate child!"

"But really, mamma, is it possible?"

"Alas!"

"But God, who knows all, who can do all, will he abandon us, who have never offended him?"

"I entreat you, my dearest girl, do not give way to these distressing ideas. I would prefer seeing you hope, without great reason, either. Come, come, comfort me rather with your consoling ideas; I am but too apt to be discouraged, as you well know."

"Yes, yes, let us hope, that is best. No doubt the porter's nephew will return to-day from the *Poste-Restante* with a letter. Another errand to pay out of your little stock, and through my fault. If I had not been so weak yesterday and to-day we should have gone to the post-office ourselves, as we did the day before yesterday; but you will not leave me here alone and go yourself."

"How could I, my dear? Only think, just now, that horrid man who burst open the door! Suppose you had been alone?"

"Oh, mamma, pray don't talk of it; it quite frightens me only to think of it."

At this moment some one knocked suddenly at the door.

"Heaven, it is he again!" exclaimed Madame de Fermont, still under her first fears; and she pushed the table against the door with all her strength. Her fears ceased when she heard the voice of Father Micou:

"Madame, my nephew, André, has come from the *Poste-Restante*. He has brought a letter with an 'X' and a 'Z.' It comes a long way; there are eight sous for postage, and commission makes twenty sous."

"Mamma, a letter from the country, — we are saved! It is from M. de Saint-Remy or M. d'Orbigny. Poor mother! You will not suffer any more; you will no longer be uneasy about me, you will be so happy! God is just! God is good!" exclaimed the young girl, and a ray of hope lighted up her mild and lovely face.

"Oh, sir, thank you; give it to me quickly!" said Madame de Fermont, moving the table as well as she could, and half opening the door.

"Twenty sous," said the man, giving her the anxiously desired letter.

"I will pay you, sir."

"Oh, madame, there's no hurry, I am going up higher; in ten minutes I shall be down again, and can call for the money as I pass."

"The letter is from Normandy, with the postmark of 'Les Aubiers.' It is from Madame d'Orbigny!" exclaimed Madame de Fermont, examining the address, "To Madame X. Z., *Poste-Restante*, à Paris."

"Well, mamma, am I right? Oh, how my heart beats!"

"Our good or bad fate is in it," said Madame de Fermont; and twice her trembling hand was extended to break the seal; she had not courage.

How can we describe the terrible agony to which they are a prey who, like Madame de Fermont, expect a letter which brings them either hope or despair? The burning, fevered excitement of the player whose last pieces of gold are hazarded on a card, and who, breathless, with inflamed eye, awaits for a decisive cast which brings his ruin or his fortune, — this emotion, violent as it is, may perhaps give some idea of the painful anguish of which we speak. In a second the soul is elevated to the most radiant hope or relapses into the most mortal discouragement. According as he hopes to be aided, or fears to be refused, the unhappy wretch suffers in turn emotions of a most contrary nature, — unutterable feelings of happi-

ness and gratitude to the generous heart which pities his miserable condition — bitter and intense resentment against selfish indifference!

When it is a question of deserving sufferers, those who give often would perhaps give always, and those who always refuse would perhaps give frequently, if they knew or saw that the hope of benevolent aid or the fear of a haughty refusal — that their decision, indeed — can excite all that is distressing or encouraging in the hearts of their petitioners.

"What weakness!" said Madame de Fermont, with a deep sigh, seating herself by her daughter; "once again, my poor Claire, our destiny is in this envelope; I burn with anxiety to know its contents, and yet I dare not read it. If it be a refusal, alas, it will be soon enough!"

"And if it be a promise of assistance, then, mamma — If this poor little letter contain consoling words, which shall assure us for the future, by promising us a humble employment in the establishment of M. d'Orbigny, every moment lost is a moment of happiness lost, — is it not?"

"Yes, my love; but on the other hand — "

"No, mamma, you are mistaken; I told you that M. d'Orbigny had only delayed so long that he might mention something certain to you. Let me see the letter, mamma. I am sure I can guess if it is good or bad by the writing. And I am sure," said Claire, looking at the letter, "that it is a kind and generous hand, accustomed to execute benevolence towards those who suffer."

"I entreat you, Claire, not to give way to vain hopes; for, if you do, I shall not have the courage to open the letter."

"My dear mother, without opening it, I can tell you almost word for word what it contains. Listen: 'Madame, — Your fate and that of your daughter are so worthy of interest, that I beg you will come to me, in

case you should like to undertake the superintendence of my house.'"

"Pray, my dearest, I beseech you, do not give way to vain hopes; the disappointment would be terrible!" said Madame de Fermont, taking the letter.

"Come, dear mamma," said Claire, smiling, and excited by one of those feelings of certainty so natural to her age, "give me the letter; I have courage to read it!"

"No," said Madame de Fermont, "I will read it! It is from the Comtesse d'Orbigny."

"So much the better," replied Claire.

"We shall see." And Madame de Fermont read as follows in a trembling voice:

"'MADAME:—M. the Comte d'Orbigny, who has been a great invalid for some time, could not reply to you during my absence—'"

"You see, mamma, it was no one's fault."

"Listen, listen!

"'On arriving from Paris this morning, I hasten to write to you, madame, after having discussed your letter with M. d'Orbigny. He recollects but very indistinctly the intimacy you allude to as having subsisted between him and your brother. As to the name of your husband, madame, it is not unknown to M. d'Orbigny; but he cannot recall to mind under what circumstances he has heard it. The spoliation of which you so unhesitatingly accuse M. Jacques Ferrand, whom we have the happiness to call our solicitor, is, in the eyes of M. d'Orbigny, a cruel calumny, whose effects you have by no means calculated upon. My husband, as well as myself, madame, know and admire the extreme probity of the respectable and pious individual whom you so blindly assail; and I am compelled to tell you, madame, that M. d'Orbigny, whilst he regrets the painful situation in which you are placed, and the real cause of which it is not his business to find out, feels it impossible to afford you the assistance requested. Accept, madame, with the expression of M. d'Orbigny's regrets, my best compliments.

"'COMTESSE D'ORBIGNY.'"

The mother and daughter looked at each other perfectly stupefied, and incapable of uttering a word. Father Micou rapped at the door, and said:

"Madame, may I come in for the postage and commission? It's twenty sous."

"Ah, true, such good news is worth a sum on which we exist for two days," said Madame de Fermont, with a bitter smile, laying the letter down on her daughter's bed, and going towards an old trunk without a lock, to which she stooped down and opened. "We are robbed!" exclaimed the unhappy woman, with alarm. "Nothing — not a sou left!" she added, in a mournful voice; and, overwhelmed, she supported herself on the trunk.

"What do you say, mamma, — the bag with the money in it?"

But Madame de Fermont, rising suddenly, opened the room door, and, addressing the receiver, who was on the landing-place:

"Sir," she said, whilst her eyes sparkled, and her cheeks were flushed with indignation and alarm, "I had a bag of silver in this trunk; it was stolen from me, no doubt, the day before yesterday, when I went out for an hour with my daughter. The money must be restored, I tell you, — you are responsible for it!"

"You've been robbed! That's false, I know. My house is respectable," said the fellow, in an insolent and brutal tone; "you only say that in order not to pay me my postage and commission."

"I tell you, sir, that this money was all I possessed in the world; it has been stolen from me, and I must have it found and restored, or I will lodge an information. Oh, I will conceal nothing — I will respect nothing — I tell you!"

"Very fine, indeed! You who have got no papers. Go and lay your information, — go at once. Why don't you? I defy you, I do!"

The wretched woman was thunderstruck. She could

not go out and leave her daughter alone, confined to her bed as she was by the fright the Gros-Boiteux had occasioned her in the morning, and particularly after the threats with which the receiver of stolen goods had menaced her. He added:

"This is a fudge! You'd as much a bag of silver there as a bag of gold. Will you pay me for the letter, — will you or won't you? Well, it's just the same to me. When you go by my door, I'll snatch off your old black shawl from your shoulders. It's a precious shabby one; but I daresay I can make twenty sous out of it."

"Oh, sir," exclaimed Madame de Fermont, bursting into tears, "I beseech you have pity upon us! This small sum is all we possess, my daughter and I, and, that stolen, we have nothing left — nothing — I say nothing, but — to die of starvation!"

"What can I do? If it's true that you have been robbed, and of silver, too (which appears to me very unlikely), why, the silver has been melted long since, rely on it."

"*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*"

"The chap who did the trick was not so soft, rely on it, as to mark the pieces, and keep 'em here, to lead to his own detection. Supposing it's any one in the house, which I don't believe (for, as I was a-saying this morning to the uncle of the lady on the first floor, this is really a village), if any one has robbed you, it is a pity. You may lay a hundred informations, but you won't recover a centime. You won't do any good by that, I tell you, and you may believe me. Well, but I say —" exclaimed the receiver, stopping short, and seeing Madame de Fermont stagger. "What's the matter? How pale you are! Mademoiselle, your mother's taken ill!" added Micou, just advancing in time to catch the unhappy mother, who, overcome by this last shock, felt her senses forsake her, — the forced energy which had supported her so long failed before this fresh blow.

"Mother, dear, oh, what ails you?" exclaimed Claire, still in her bed.

The receiver, still vigorous in spite of his fifty years, seized with a momentary feeling of pity, took Madame de Fermont in his arms, pushed the door open with his knee, and, entering the chamber, said:

"Your pardon, mademoiselle, for entering whilst you are in bed, but I was obliged to bring in your mother; she has fainted, but it won't last long."

On seeing the man enter, Claire shrieked loudly, and the unhappy girl hid herself as well as she could under the bedclothes. The huckster seated Madame de Fermont in a chair beside the bed, and then went out, leaving the door ajar, for the Gros-Boiteux had broken the lock.

One hour after this last shock, the violent malady which had so long hung over and threatened Madame de Fermont had developed itself. A prey to a burning fever and to fearful delirium, the unhappy woman was placed beside her daughter, who, horror-struck, aghast, alone, and almost as ill as her mother, had neither money nor recourse, and was in an agony of fear every moment lest the ruffian who lodged on the same floor should enter the apartment.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RUE DE CHAILLOT.

We will precede M. Badinot by some hours, as in haste he proceeded from the Passage de la Brasserie to the Vicomte de Saint-Remy. The latter, as we have said, lived in the Rue de Chaillot, and occupied a delightful small house, built between the court and the garden in this quarter, so solitary, although so close to the Champs Elysées, the most fashionable promenade in Paris.

It is useless to enumerate the advantages which M. de Saint-Remy, who was decidedly a man *à bonnes fortunes*, derived from the position of a residence so sagaciously selected. We will only say that a gentleman (or a lady) could enter very privately by a small door in the large garden which opened into a back lane absolutely deserted, communicating from the Rue Marbœuf to the Rue de Chaillot. By wonderful chance, one of the finest nursery-grounds in Paris having also in this quiet passage a way out that was little frequented, the mysterious visitors of M. de Saint-Remy, in case of a surprise or sudden rencounter, were armed with a most plausible and bucolical excuse for their visit to the lonely alley: they were there (they might say if they pleased) to choose some rare flowers from the celebrated gardener who was so renowned for the beauty of his conservatories. The visitors need only thus tell half falsehoods; for the vicomte, plentifully imbued with all the tastes of most costly luxuries, had a delightful greenhouse, which extended along the side of the alley we have alluded to.

The small private door opened on this delightful winter garden, which terminated in a boudoir (forgive the superannuated expression), which was on the ground floor of the house.

We may say, therefore, without metaphor, that a female who passed this dangerous threshold, to enter M. de Saint-Remy's house, ran to her ruin through a flowery path; for, in the winter particularly, this lonely alley was bordered with real bushes of bright and perfumed flowers. Madame de Lucenay, jealous as a woman deeply in love always is, had demanded the key of this small door.

If we dwell somewhat on the general aspect of this dwelling, it is that it reflected (if we may be allowed the expression) one of those degrading existences which from day to day become happily more rare, but which it may be as well to note down as one of the peculiarities of the epoch.

The interior of M. de Saint-Remy's house presented (viewed in this light) a curious appearance, or rather the house was separated into two distinct zones, — the ground floor, where he received his female visitors; the first story, where he received his gambling companions or his dinner or hunting associates; in a word, what he called his friends. Thus on the ground floor was a bedchamber, which was nothing but gold, mirrors, flowers, satin, and lace; then a small music-room, in which was a harp and piano (M. de Saint-Remy was an excellent musician); a cabinet of pictures; and then the boudoir, which communicated with the conservatory; a dining-room for two persons, who were served and passed away the dishes and plates by a turning window; a bath-room, a model of luxury and Oriental refinement; and, close at hand, a small library, a portion of which was arranged after the catalogue of that which La Mettrie had collected for Frederic the Great. Such was this apartment.

It would be unavailing to say that all these rooms,

furnished with exquisite taste, and with a Sardanapalian luxury, had as ornaments Watteaus little known; Bouchers never engraved; wanton subjects, formerly purchased at enormous prices. There were, besides, groups modelled in terra-cotta, by Clodien, and here and there, on plinths of jasper or antique breccia, some rare copies, in white marble, of the most jovial and lovely bacchanals of the Secret Museum of Naples.

Add to this, in summer there were in perspective the green recesses of a well-planted garden, lonely, replete with flowers and birds, watered by a small and sparkling fountain, which, before it spread itself on the verdant turf, fell from a black and shaggy rock, scintillated like a strip of silver gauze, and dashed into a clear basin like mother-of-pearl, where beautiful white swans wantoned with grace and freedom.

Then, when the mild and serene night came on, what shade, what perfume, what silence, was there in those odorous clumps, whose thick foliage served as a dais for the rustic seats formed of reeds and Indian mats.

During the winter, on the contrary, except the glass door which opened to the hothouse, all was kept close shut. The transparent silk of the blinds, the net lace of the curtains, made the daylight still more mysterious. On all the pieces of furniture large tufts of exotic plants seemed to put forth their large flowers, resplendent with gold and enamel.

In order to do the honours of this temple, which seemed raised to antique Love, or the denuded divinities of Greece, behold a man, young, handsome, elegant, and distinguished, — by turns witty and tender, romantic or libertine; now jesting and gay to folly, now full of charm and grace; an excellent musician, gifted with one of those impassioned, vibrating voices which women cannot hear without experiencing a deep impression, almost physical, — in fact, a man essentially made for love, — such was the vicomte. In Athens, no doubt, he

would have been admired, exalted, deified, as was Alcibiades; in our days, and at the period of which we write, the vicomte was nothing more than a base forger, a contemptible swindler.

The first story of M. de Saint-Remy's house was exceedingly masculine in its whole appearance. It was there he received his many friends, all of whom were of the very highest society. There was nothing effeminate, nothing coquettish. The furniture was plain, but elegant, the ornaments being first-rate weapons of all sorts, pictures of race-horses, who had won for the vicomte a great number of magnificent gold and silver vases, which were placed on the tables and sideboards.

The smoking-room and play-room were closed by a cheerful dining-room, where eight persons (the number to which the guests were rigidly confined when there was a first-class dinner) had often appreciated the excellence of the cook, and the no less high merit of the wine of the vicomte, before they faced him at some high game of whist for five or six hundred louis, or shook the noisy dice-box at infernal hazard or roulette.

These two widely opposite shades of M. de Saint-Remy disclosed, the reader will follow us into the regions below, to the very comfortable apartment of Edwards Patterson, the master of the horse of M. de Saint-Remy, who had invited M. Boyer to breakfast. A very pretty English maid-servant having withdrawn after she had brought in the silver teapot, these two worthies remained alone.

Edwards was about forty years of age, and never did more skilful or stouter coachman make a seat groan under his most imposing rotundity; never did powdered wig enclose a more rubicund visage; and never did a more knowing and competent driver hold in his four fingers and thumb the reins of a four-in-hand. As good a judge of a horse as Tattersal (and in his youth he had been as good a trainer as the old and celebrated Chiffney), Edwards had been to the vicomte

a most excellent coachman, and a man perfectly capable of superintending the training of race-horses on which he had betted heavily.

When he did not assume his sumptuous brown and silver livery on the emblazoned hammercloth of his box, Edwards very much resembled an honest English farmer; and it is under this aspect that we shall present him to the reader, adding, at the same time, that beneath this round and red visage there lurked all the pitiless and devilish cunning of the horse-dealer.

M. Boyer, his guest, the confidential servant of the vicomte, was a tall, thin man, with gray, smooth hair, bald forehead, cunning glance, with a countenance calm, discreet, and reserved. He expressed himself in somewhat choice phraseology, with polite, easy manners; he was tolerably well informed, his political opinions being legitimist, and he could take his part as first violin in an amateur quartette. From time to time, and with the best air in the world, he took a pinch of snuff from a gold snuff-box, set around with fine pearls, after which he negligently shook with the back of his hand (as white and carefully attended to as his master's) the particles of snuff from the frill of his fine Holland shirt.

"Do you know, my dear Edwards," said Boyer, "that your maid, Betty, really does your meals in a very fair manner! *Ma foi!* now and then one gets tired of high living."

"The fact is that Betty is a very good girl," said Edwards, who spoke very good French. "I shall take her with me into my establishment, if I make up my mind to set up in housekeeping; and on this point, since we are alone, my dear Boyer, let us talk of business matters which you know as well as I do."

"Why, yes, tolerably," said Boyer, modestly taking a pinch of snuff, "one learns them so naturally, when they are the affairs of others that occupy us."

"I want your advice on a very important point, and

that's the reason I have begged you to come and take a cup of tea with me."

"I'm at your service, my dear Edwards."

"You know that, besides the race-horses, I had an agreement with M. le Vicomte to the complete providing of his stable, horses, and men, that is to say, eight horses and five or six grooms and boys, for twenty-four thousand francs (nine thousand guineas) a year, including my wages."

"That was moderate enough."

"For four years M. le Vicomte paid me very regularly; but about the middle of last year he said to me, 'Edwards, I owe you about twenty-four thousand francs. What value, at the lowest, do you set on my horses and carriages?' 'Monsieur le Vicomte, the eight horses ought to fetch three thousand francs (120*l.*) each, one with another, and that would make (and it's true, Boyer, for the pair of phaeton horses cost five hundred guineas) exactly twenty-four thousand francs for the horses. As to the carriages, there are four, let us say, for twelve thousand francs; that, added to the twenty-four thousand francs for the horses, makes thirty-six thousand francs.' 'Well,' replied the vicomte, 'buy the whole of me at that price, on condition that for the twelve thousand francs which you will owe me, paid as it were in advance, you shall keep and place at my disposal horses, servants, and carriages for six months.'"

"And you very wisely acceded to the proposal, Edwards? It was a golden gain to you."

"No doubt. In another fortnight the six months will have expired, and I become proprietor of the horses and carriages."

"Nothing plainer. The agreement was drawn up by M. Badinot, the vicomte's man of business, what do you want with my advice?"

"What should I do? To sell the horses and carriages in consequence of M. le Vicomte's departure? All

would sell well, as he is known as one of the first judges in Paris; or ought I to set up as a horse-dealer with my stud, which would make a capital beginning? What is your opinion — your advice?"

"I advise you to do what I shall do myself."

"In what way?"

"I am in the same position as yourself."

"You?"

"M. le Vicomte detests details. When I entered in his service I had, by savings and inheritance, sixty thousand francs (2,400*l.*). I paid the expenses of the house as you did of the stables; and every year M. le Vicomte paid me without examining my account. At nearly the same time as yourself I found myself out of pocket about twenty thousand francs on my own account, and, to the tradespeople, sixty thousand francs. Then M. le Vicomte made me the same proposition as to yourself, in order to reimburse me. I was to sell the furniture of the house, including the plate, which is very handsome, very fine paintings, etc., the whole estimated at a hundred and forty thousand francs (5,600*l.*). There were eighty thousand francs to pay, and there remained sixty thousand francs which I was to disburse until they were quite exhausted, in the expenses of the table, the servants' wages, etc., and in nothing else. These were the terms of the agreement."

"Because on that outlay you have a profit."

"As a matter of course; for I made all the agreements with the tradespeople, whom I shall not pay until after the sale," said Boyer, taking a huge pinch of snuff; "so that at the end of this month — "

"The furniture is yours, as the horses and carriages are mine."

"Precisely so. M. le Vicomte has gained by this, by living for the last few months as he likes to live, *en grand seigneur*, — and that in the very teeth of his creditors; for furniture, plate, horses, carriages, which

had all been paid for ready money when he came of age, have now become the property of yourself and myself."

"And so M. le Vicomte is really ruined?"

"In five years."

"And M. le Vicomte inherited — "

"Only a miserable million (40,000*l.*), ready money," said M. Boyer, with a disdainful air, and taking a pinch of snuff. "Add to this two hundred thousand francs of debts (8,000*l.*), about — that's pretty well! It was, therefore, to tell you, my dear Edwards, that I had an intention of letting this house, so admirably furnished as it is, to some English family, linen, glass, china, silver, conservatory. Some of your country-people would pay a good rent for it?"

"Unquestionably. Why don't you do so?"

"Why, there's considerable risk, and so I make up my mind to sell the whole at once. M. le Vicomte is also known as a connoisseur in first-class furniture and objects of art, so that anything that he has selected will always fetch double its value, and I am safe to realise a large sum. Do as I do, Edwards, and realise — realise. Don't risk your profits in speculation. You, first coachman of M. le Vicomte de Saint-Remy, — why, there'll be a competition for you. And yesterday I just heard of a minor who has recently been emancipated, a cousin of Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay, the young Duc de Montbrison, who has just arrived from Italy with his tutor, and is forming his establishment. Two hundred and fifty thousand livres of income (10,000*l.*) from land, my dear Edwards, two hundred and fifty thousand livres a year, — just entering into life, — twenty years of age only, — with all the illusions of simple confidence, and all the desires of expenditure, — prodigal as a prince. I know the steward; and I tell you, in confidence, he has all but concluded with me as first *valet de chambre*. He patronises me, — the fool!"

And M. Boyer shrugged his shoulders, whilst he inhaled another large pinch of snuff.

"You hope to get rid of him?"

"*Parbleu*, he is a jackanapes, — an ass! He places me there as if he ought not to have any fears of me. Before two months I shall be in his place."

"Two hundred and fifty thousand livres a year in land!" replied Edwards, reflecting; "and a young man! It is a good house?"

"I tell you there is everything to make a man comfortable. I will speak to my protector for you," said M. Boyer, with irony. "Take the place; it is a fortune which has roots to it, and one may hold on by it for a long time. It is not like the unfortunate million of M. le Vicomte, a snowball, and nothing else, — a ray of a Parisian sun, and that's all. I soon saw that I should only be a bird of passage here. It's a pity, for the establishment did us credit; and, to the last moment, I will serve M. le Vicomte with the respect and esteem due to him."

"*Ma foi*, my dear Boyer, I thank you, and accept your proposition. And, now I think of it, suppose I were to propose the stud of M. le Vicomte to this young duke! It is all ready, and known and admired all over Paris."

"True, you may make a profitable affair of it."

"And you, why don't you propose to him this house so admirably fitted up in every way? What could he find better?"

"Bravo! Edwards, you are a man of sense decidedly; you have suggested a most excellent idea. We must ask the vicomte; he is such a good master that he will not refuse to speak for us to the young duke. He may say that, as he is going on the legation of Gerolstein, to which he is attached, he wishes to get rid of his whole establishment. Let us see. One hundred and sixty thousand francs for the house furnished, twenty thou-

sand francs for plate and pictures, fifty thousand francs for stable and carriages, that makes two hundred and thirty thousand francs; and it is a bargain for a young man who wishes to be set up at once in the first style."

"And the horses!"

"And the capital table! Gallefroi, his cook, will leave a hundred times better off than when he came here first. M. le Vicomte has given him capital instruction, — has regularly refined him!"

"They say, too, that M. le Vicomte is such a capital player?"

"Admirable! Gaining large sums with even more indifference than he loses them! And yet I never saw any one lose with better taste!"

"And the women, Boyer, — the women! Ah, you could tell a tale! You have the sole *entrée* to the apartments of the ground floor — "

"I have my secrets as you have yours, my dear fellow."

"Mine?"

"When M. le Vicomte ran his horses, had you not your confidences? I will not attack the honesty of the jockeys of your opponents; but there were reports — "

"Hush, my dear Boyer, a gentleman never compromises the reputation of a jockey who is against him, and has the weakness to listen — "

"Then a gallant never compromises the reputation of a woman who has been kind to him. So, I say, let's keep our secrets, or, rather, the secrets of M. le Vicomte, my dear Edwards."

"Ah, good! What will he do now?"

"He is going to Germany in a good travelling carriage, with seven or eight thousand francs, which he knows when to lay his hand upon. Oh, I have no fears for the vicomte! He is one of those personages who always fall on their feet, as they say."

"And he has no future expectancies?"

"None; for his father has nothing but just enough to live upon."

"His father?"

"Certainly."

"M. le Vicomte's father is not dead?"

"He was not dead five or six months ago when M. le Vicomte wrote to him for some family papers."

"But we never see him here?"

"For reasons good. For fifteen years he has resided in the country at Angers."

"But M. le Vicomte never visits him?"

"His father?"

"Yes."

"Never — never!"

"Have they quarrelled, then?"

"What I am going to tell you is no secret, for I have it from the old man of business of M. the Prince de Noirmont."

"Father of Madame de Lucenay?" said Edwards, with a knowing glance at Boyer, who, appearing not to understand him, replied coolly:

"Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay is the daughter of M. the Prince de Noirmont. The father of M. le Vicomte was bosom friend of the prince. Madame la Duchesse was then very young, and M. de Saint-Remy, senior, who was very fond of her, treated her as if she were his own child. I learnt these details from Simon, the prince's man of business; and I may speak unhesitatingly, for the adventure I am about to narrate to you was, at the time, the talk of all Paris. In spite of his sixty years, the father of M. le Vicomte is a man of iron disposition, with the courage of a lion, of probity which I call almost fabulous. He had scarcely any property of his own, and had married the vicomte's mother for love. She was a young person of good fortune, possessing about a million of francs, at the

melting of which we have had the honour to be present." And M. Boyer bowed. Edwards imitated him.

"The marriage was a very happy one, until the moment when the father of M. le Vicomte found — accidentally, as they say — some letters, which proved that, during one of his absences three or four years after his marriage, his wife had had an attachment for a certain Polish count."

"That often happens to these Poles. When I was at the Marquis de Senneval's, the marquise, a regular she-devil — "

"My dear Edwards," interrupted M. Boyer, "you should learn the alliances of our great families before you speak, or you will sadly blunder."

"How?"

"Madame la Marquise de Senneval is sister of M. le Duc de Montbrison, into whose establishment you wish to enter."

"Ah, the devil!"

"Judge of the effect if you had spoken thus of her before tattling people! You would not have remained in the house twenty-four hours."

"True, Boyer; I must endeavour to 'get up' my peerage."

"I resume. The father of M. le Vicomte discovered, after twelve or fifteen years of a marriage very happy until then, that he had this Polish count to complain of. Fortunately, or unfortunately, M. le Vicomte was born nine months after his father, or rather M. le Comte de Saint-Remy, had returned from this unpropitious journey, so that he could not be certain, in spite of the greatest probabilities, whether or not M. le Vicomte could fairly charge him with paternity. However, the comte separated instantly from his wife, would not touch a stiver of the fortune she had brought him, and returned into the country with about eighty thousand francs which he possessed of his own. But you have yet to learn the

rancour of this diabolical character. Although the outrage had been perpetrated fifteen years when he detected it, the father of M. le Vicomte, accompanied by M. de Fermont, one of his relatives, sought out this Polonese seducer, and found him at Venice, after having sought for him during eighteen months in every city in Europe."

"What determination!"

"A demon's rancour, I say, my dear Edwards! At Venice there was a ferocious duel, in which the Pole was killed. All passed off honourably; but they tell me that, when the father of M. le Vicomte saw the Pole fall at his feet mortally wounded, he exhibited such ferocious joy that his relative, M. de Fermont, was obliged to take him away from the place of combat; the comte wishing, as he declared, to see his enemy die before his eyes."

"What a man! What a man!"

"The comte returned to Paris, saw his wife, told her he had killed the Pole, and went back into the country. Since that time he never saw her or her son, and resided at Angers, where he lived, as they say, like a regular old wolf, with what was left of his eighty thousand francs, which had been sweated down not a little, as you may suppose, by his chase after the Pole. At Angers he saw no one, unless it were the wife and daughter of his relative, M. de Fermont, who has been dead some years now. Besides, it was an unfortunate family, for the brother of Madame de Fermont blew his brains out some months ago."

"And the mother of M. le Vicomte?"

"He lost her a long time ago; that's the reason that, when he attained his majority, M. le Vicomte came into his mother's fortune. So, you see, my dear Edwards, that, as to inheritance, the vicomte has nothing, or almost less than nothing, to expect from his father."

"Who, moreover, detests him."

"He never would see him after the discovery in ques-

tion, being fully persuaded, no doubt, that he is the son of the Pole."

The conversation of these two personages was interrupted by a gigantic footman, elaborately powdered, although it was scarcely eleven o'clock.

"M. Boyer, M. le Vicomte has rung his bell twice," said the giant.

Boyer appeared immensely distressed at having apparently been inattentive to his duty, rose hastily, and followed the footman with as much haste and respect as if he had not been himself, in his proper person, the proprietor of his master's house.

CHAPTER X.

THE COMTE DE SAINT-REMY.

It was about two hours after Boyer had left Edwards to go to M. de Saint-Remy, when the father of the latter knocked at the door of the house in the Rue de Chaillot.

M. de Saint-Remy, senior, was a tall man, still active and vigorous in spite of his age. The extreme darkness of his complexion contrasted singularly with the peculiar whiteness of his beard and hair; his thick eyebrows still remained black, and half covered his piercing eyes deeply sunk in his head. Although from a kind of misanthropic feeling he wore clothes which were extremely shabby, yet there was in his entire appearance something so calm and dignified as to inspire general respect.

The door of his son's house opened, and he went in.

A porter in dress livery of brown and silver, with his hair carefully powdered, and dressed in silk stockings, appeared on the threshold of an elegant lodge, which resembled the smoky cave of the Pipelets as much as does the tub of a stocking-darner the splendid shop of a fashionable dressmaker.

"M. de Saint-Remy?" said the comte, in an abrupt tone.

The porter, instead of replying, scrutinised with impertinent curiosity the white beard, the threadbare frock coat, and the napless hat of the unknown, who held a stout cane in his hand.

"M. de Saint-Remy?" again said the comte, impatiently, and much irritated at the insolent demeanour of the porter.

"M. le Vicomte is not at home."

So saying, the co-mate of M. Pipelet opened the door, and, with a significant gesture, invited the unknown to retire.

"I will wait for him," said the comte, and he moved forward.

"Holloa! Come, I say, my friend, that's not the way people enter other people's houses!" exclaimed the porter, running after the comte, and taking him by the arm.

"What, fellow!" replied the old man, with a threatening air, and lifting his cane, "dare you to lay your hands on me?"

"I dare do more than that if you do not be off quickly. I tell you the vicomte is not within; so now go away, will you?"

At this moment Boyer, attracted by the sound of contending voices, appeared on the steps which led to the house.

"What is the meaning of this noise?" he inquired.

"M. Boyer, it is this man, who will go into the house, although I have told him that M. le Vicomte is not within."

"Hold your tongue!" said the comte. And then addressing Boyer, who had come towards them, "I wish to see my son. He is out, and therefore I will wait for him."

We have already said that Boyer was neither ignorant of the existence nor the misanthropy of his master's father; and being, moreover, a physiognomist, he did not for a moment doubt the comte's identity, but, bowing respectfully, replied:

"If M. le Comte will follow me, I will conduct him —"

"Very well!" said M. de Saint-Remy, who followed Boyer, to the extreme amazement of the porter.

Preceded by the *valet de chambre*, the comte reached the first story, and followed his guide across the small

sitting-room of Florestan de Saint-Remy (we shall in future call the viscount by his baptismal name to distinguish him more easily from his father) until they reached a small antechamber communicating with the sitting-room, and sitting immediately over the boudoir on the ground floor.

"M. le Vicomte was obliged to go out this morning," said Boyer. "If M. le Comte will be so kind as to wait a little for him, he will not be long before he comes in." And the *valet de chambre* quitted the apartment.

Left alone, the count looked about him with entire indifference; but suddenly he started, his face became animated, his cheeks grew purple, and anger agitated his features. His eyes had lighted on the portrait of his wife, the mother of Florestan de Saint-Remy! He folded his arms across his breast, bowed his head, as if to escape this sight, and strode rapidly up and down the room.

"This is strange!" he said. "That woman is dead — I killed her lover — and yet my wound is as deep, as sensitive, as the first day I received it; my thirst of vengeance is not yet quenched; my savage misanthropy, which has all but entirely isolated me from the world, has left me alone, and in constant contemplation of the thought of my injury. Yes; for the death of the accomplice of this infamy has avenged the outrage, but not effaced its memory from my remembrance. Oh, yes! I feel that what renders my hatred inextinguishable is the thought that, for fifteen years, I was a dupe; that for fifteen years I treated with respect and esteem a wretched woman who had infamously betrayed me; that I have loved her son — the son of crime — as if he had indeed been my own child; for the aversion with which Florestan now inspires me proves but too clearly that he is the offspring of adultery! And yet I have not the absolute conviction of his illegitimacy: it is just possible that he is still my child! And sometimes that thought is agony

to me! If he were indeed my son! Then my abandonment of him, the coldness I have always testified towards him, my constant refusals to see him, are unpardonable. But, after all, he is rich, young, happy; and of what use should I be to him? Yes; but then, perchance, his tenderness might have soothed the bitter anguish which his mother has caused me!"

After a moment of deep reflection the comte shrugged his shoulders and continued:

"Still these foolish suppositions, weak as useless, which revive all my suffering! Let me be a man, and overcome the absurd and painful emotion which I experience when I think that I am again about to see him whom, for ten years, I have loved with the most mad idolatry, — whom I have loved as my son; he — he — the son of the man whose blood I saw flow with such intense joy! And they would not let me be present at his last agony, — at his death! Ah, they know not what it was to have been stricken as deeply as I was! Then, too, to think that my name — always honoured and respected — should have been so often mentioned with scoff and derision, as is always mentioned that of a wronged husband! To think that my name — a name of which I had always been so proud — should now belong to a man whose father's heart I could have plucked out! Ah, I only wonder I do not go mad when I think of it!"

M. de Saint-Remy continued walking up and down in great agitation, and mechanically lifted up the curtain which separated the apartment in which he was from Florestan's private sitting-room, and advanced several strides into that chamber.

He had disappeared for the moment, when a small door hidden in the hangings of the wall opened softly, and Madame de Lucenay, wrapped in a large green cashmere shawl, having a very plain black velvet bonnet on, entered the salon, which the comte had but that instant quitted.

It is necessary to offer some explanation of this unexpected visit.

Florestan de Saint-Remy on the previous evening made an appointment with the duchess for the next morning. She having, as we have said, a key of the little gate in the narrow lane, had, as usual, entered by the conservatory, relying on finding Florestan on the ground floor boudoir; but, not finding him there, she believed (as had before occurred) that the vicomte was engaged in his cabinet.

A secret staircase led from the boudoir to the story above. Madame de Lucenay went up without hesitation, supposing that M. de Saint-Remy had given orders, as usual, to be denied to everybody. Unluckily, a threatening call from M. Badinot had compelled Florestan to go out hastily, and he had forgotten his rendezvous with Madame de Lucenay. She, not seeing any person, was about to enter the cabinet, when the curtain was thrown on one side, and the duchess found herself confronted with Florestan's father.

She could not repress a shriek.

"Clotilde!" exclaimed the comte, greatly astonished.

Intimately acquainted with the Prince de Noirmont, father of Madame de Lucenay, M. de Saint-Remy had known her from her childhood, and, during her girlhood, calling her, as he now did, by her baptismal name. The duchess, motionless with surprise, continued gazing on the old man with his white beard and mean attire, whose features she could not recall to mind.

"You, Clotilde!" repeated the comte, in an accent of painful reproach; "you here, in my son's house!"

These last words confirmed the vague reminiscence of Madame de Lucenay, who then recognised Florestan's father, and said:

"M. de Saint-Remy?"

The position was so plain and declaratory that the duchess, whose peculiar and resolute character is known

to the reader, disdained to have recourse to falsehood, in order to account for her appearance there; and, relying on the really paternal affection which the comte had always testified for her, she said to him, with that air at once graceful, cordial, and decided, which was so peculiarly her own:"

"Come, now, do not scold; you are my old, very old friend. Recollect you called me your dear little Clotilde at least twenty years ago."

"Yes, I called you so then; but —"

"I know beforehand all you would say: you know my motto, 'What is, is what will be.'"

"Oh, Clotilde!"

"Spare your reproaches, and let me rather express my extreme delight at seeing you again: your presence reminds me of so many things, — my poor dear father, in the first place, and then — heigho! my 'sweet fifteen!' Oh, how delightful it is to be fifteen!"

"It is because your father was my friend that —"

"Oh, yes," said the duchess, interrupting M. de Saint-Remy, "he was so very fond of you! You remember he always called you the man with the green ribands, and you always told him, 'You spoil Clotilde; mind, I tell you so;' and he replied, whilst he kissed me, 'I really do believe I spoil her, and I must make all haste and double my spoiling, for very soon the world will deprive me of her to spoil her in their turn.' Dear father! What a friend I lost!" and a tear started to the lovely eyes of Madame de Lucenay; then, extending her hand to M. de Saint-Remy, she said, in a faltering voice, "But indeed, in truth, I am happy, very happy, to see you again, you call up such precious remembrances, — memories so dear to my heart!"

The comte, although he had long been acquainted with her original and decisive disposition, was really amazed at the ease with which Clotilde reconciled herself to her exceedingly delicate position, which was no

other than to meet her lover's father in her lover's house.

"If you have been in Paris for any time," continued Madame de Lucenay, "it is very naughty of you not to have come and seen me before this; for we should have had such long talks over the past; for you must know that I have reached an age when there is an excessive pleasure in saying to old friends, 'Don't you remember!'"

Assuredly the duchess could not have discoursed with more confirmed tranquillity if she were receiving a morning visit at the Hôtel de Lucenay. M. de Saint-Remy could not prevent himself from saying with severity:

"Instead of talking of the past, it would be more fitting to discourse of the present. My son is expected every instant, and —"

"No," said Clotilde, interrupting him, "I have the key of the little door of the conservatory, and his arrival is always announced by a ring of the bell when he returns by the principal entrance; and at that sound I shall disappear as mysteriously as I arrived, and will leave you to all your pleasure, at again seeing Florestan. What a delightful surprise you will give him! For it is so long since you forsook him. Really, now I think of it, it is I who have to reproach you."

"Me? Reproach me?"

"Assuredly. What guide, what aid had he, when he entered on the world? whilst there are a thousand things for which a father's counsels are indispensable. So, really and truly, it is very wrong of you —"

Here Madame de Lucenay, yielding to the whimsicality of her character, could not help laughing most heartily, and saying to the comte:

"It must be owned that our position is at least an odd one, and that it is very funny that it should be I who am sermonising you."

"Why, it does seem very strange to me, I assure you; but I deserve neither your sermons nor your praises. I have come to my son's house, but not for my son's sake. At his age, he has not, or has no longer, any need of my advice."

"What do you mean?"

"You ought to know the reason for which I hold the world, and Paris, especially, in such horror," said the comte, with a painful and distressing expression; "and you may therefore believe that nothing but circumstances of the utmost importance could have induced me to leave Angers and have come hither — to this house. But I have been forced to overcome my repugnance, and have recourse to everybody who could aid or help me in a search which is most interesting to me."

"Oh, then," said Madame de Lucenay, with affectionate eagerness, "I beg you will make use of me; dispose of me in any way in which I can be useful to you. Do you want any interest? Because De Lucenay must have some degree of influence; for, the days when I go to dine with my great-aunt, De Montbrison, he entertains the deputies; and men don't do that without some motives; and the trouble ought to be recompensed by some contingent advantages, such as a certain amount of influence over persons, who, in their turn, have a great deal of interest. So, I repeat, if we can assist you, rely on us. Then there is my cousin, the young Duke de Montbrison, who, being a peer himself, is connected with all the young peers. If he can do anything, why, I am sure you have but to command him. In a word, dispose of me and mine. You know whether or not I deserve the title of a warm and devoted friend!"

"I know it well, and do not refuse your aid, although —"

"Come, my dear Alcestis, we know how the world wags, and let us act as if we did. Whether we are here or elsewhere, it is of little consequence, I imagine, as to

the affair which interests you, and which now interests me very much because it is yours. Let us then talk of it, and tell me all I request of you."

So saying, the duchess approached the fireplace, leaned on the mantelpiece, and placed on the fender one of the prettiest feet in the world, which were, at the moment, somewhat chilled. With perfect tact Madame de Lucenay seized the opportunity of saying no more about the vicomte, and of engaging M. de Saint-Remy to talk of a subject to which he attached such great importance. Clotilde's conduct would have been very different in the presence of his mother, and to her she would have avowed with pleasure and pride how long he had been so dear to, so beloved by, her.

In spite of his strictness and surliness, M. de Saint-Remy yielded to the influence of the cavalier and cordial demeanour of this lady, whom he had seen and loved when a child, and he almost forgot that he was talking to the mistress of his son. Besides, how could he resist the contagion of example, while the subject of a position which was inexpressibly embarrassing did not seem disturbed, or even think she ought to be disturbed, by the difficulty of the situation in which she unexpectedly found herself?

"Perhaps you do not know, Clotilde," said the comte, "that I have been living at Angers for a very long time?"

"Yes, I know it."

"In spite of the solitude I sought, I had selected that city because one of my relations lived there, — M. de Fermont, — who, after the heavy blow that had smitten me, behaved to me like a brother. After having accompanied me to almost every city in Europe, where I hoped to meet with the man I desired to slay, he served me for second in the duel — "

"Yes, that terrible duel; my father told me all con-

cerning it!" answered the duchess, in a sad tone of voice. "But, fortunately, Florestan is ignorant of that duel, as well as the cause that led to it."

"I wished to let him still respect his mother," replied the comte, stifling a sigh. He then continued: "Some years afterwards, M. de Fermont died at Angers in my arms, leaving a daughter and a wife, whom, in spite of my misanthropy, I was obliged to love, because nothing in the world could be more pure, more noble, than these two excellent creatures. I lived alone in a remote quarter of the city; but when my fits of black melancholy gave me some respite, I went to Madame de Fermont to talk with her and her daughter of him we had both lost. As whilst he was alive, so still I came to soothe and calm myself in that gentle friendship in whose bosom I had henceforth concentrated all my affections. The brother of Madame de Fermont dwelt in Paris, and managed all his sister's affairs after her husband's decease. He had placed about a hundred thousand crowns (12,000*l.*), which was all the widow's fortune, with a notary.

"After some time another and fearful shock affected Madame de Fermont. Her brother, M. de Renneville, killed himself about eight months ago. I did all in my power to comfort her. Her first sorrow somewhat abated, she went to Paris to arrange her affairs. After some time I learned that, by her orders, they were selling off the furniture she had in her small abode at Angers, and that the money was applied to the payment of a few little debts she had left there. This disturbed me, and, on inquiry, I learned that this unhappy lady and her daughter were in dire distress, — the victims, no doubt, of a bankruptcy. If Madame de Fermont could, in such straits, rely on any one, it was on me, and yet I never received any information or application from her. It was when I lost this acquaintance that was so delightful to me that I felt all its value. You

cannot imagine my suffering and my uneasiness after the departure of Madame de Fermont and her daughter. Their father — husband — had been a brother to me, and I was resolved, therefore, to find them again, to learn how it was they had not addressed me in their ruin, poor as I was; and therefore I set out, leaving at Angers a person who, if anything was learned, would inform me instantly of the news."

"Well?"

"Yesterday a letter from Angers reached me, — they know nothing. When I reached Paris I began my researches. I went first to the old servant of Madame de Fermont's brother; then they told me she lived on the Quai of the Canal St. Martin."

"Well, that address —"

"Had been theirs; but they had moved, and where to was not known. Unfortunately, up to the present time, my researches have been useless. After a thousand vain attempts before I utterly despaired, I resolved to come here. Perhaps Madame de Fermont, who, from some inexplicable motive, has not asked from me aid or assistance, may have had recourse to my son as to the son of her husband's best friend. No doubt this hope has but very slight foundation; but I will not neglect any chance that may enable me to discover the poor woman and her child."

The Duchess de Lucenay, who had been listening to the comte with the utmost attention, said, suddenly:

"Really it would be very singular if these should be the same persons in whom Madame d'Harville takes so much interest."

"What persons?" inquired the comte.

"The widow of whom you speak is still young, is she not? — her face very striking?"

"Yes, but how do you know?"

"Her daughter, as lovely as an angel, and about sixteen at most?"

"Yes, yes."

"And her name is Claire?"

"Oh, for mercy's sake, say, where are they?"

"Alas! I know not."

"You know not?"

"I will tell you all I know. A lady of my acquaintance, Madame d'Harville, came to me to inquire whether or not I knew a widow lady whose daughter was named Claire, and whose brother had committed suicide. Madame d'Harville inquired of me because she had seen these words, 'Write to Madame de Lucenay,' written at the bottom of a rough sketch of a letter which this unfortunate lady was writing to some stranger of whom she was asking assistance."

"She wished to write to you; and wherefore to you?"

"I cannot solve your question."

"But she knew you, it would seem," said M. de Saint-Remy, struck with a sudden idea.

"What mean you?"

"She had heard me speak of your father a hundred times, as well as of you and your generous and excellent heart. In her misfortune, it occurred to her to address you."

"That really does explain this."

"And Madame d'Harville — tell me, how did she get this sketch of a letter into her possession?"

"That I do not know; all I can say is, that, without knowing whither this poor mother and child had gone for refuge, she was, I believe, on the trace of them."

"Then I rely on you, Clotilde, to introduce me to Madame d'Harville. I must see her this very day."

"Impossible! Her husband has just been the victim of a most afflicting accident: a pistol which he did not know to be loaded went off in his hands, and he was killed on the spot."

"How horrible!"

"The marquise went instantly to pass the first months of her mourning with her father in Normandy."

"Clotilde, I beseech you, write to her to-day; ask her for all the information in her power, and, as she takes an interest in these poor women, say she cannot find a warmer auxiliary than myself; that my only desire is to find the widow of my friend, and share with her and her daughter the little I possess. They are now all my family."

"Ever the same, always generous and devoted! Rely on me. I will write to-day to Madame d'Harville. Where shall I address my answer?"

"To Asnières *Poste-Restante*."

"How odd! Why do you live there, and not in Paris?"

"I detest Paris, because of the recollections it excites in me!" said M. de Saint-Remy, with a gloomy air. "My old physician, Doctor Griffon, with whom I have kept up a correspondence, has a small house on the banks of the Seine, near Asnières, which he does not occupy in the winter; he offered it to me; it is almost close to Paris, and there I could be undisturbed, and find the solitude I desire. So I accepted it."

"I will then write to you at Asnières, and I can give you some information which may be useful to you, and which I had from Madame d'Harville. Madame de Fermont's ruin has been occasioned by the roguery of the notary in whose hands all your deceased relative's fortune was deposited. The notary denied that the money was ever placed in his hands."

"The scoundrel! And his name?"

"M. Jacques Ferrand," replied the duchess, without being able to conceal her inclination to laugh.

"How strange you are, Clotilde!" said the comte, surprised and annoyed; "nothing can be more serious, more sad than this, and yet you laugh."

In fact, Madame de Lucenay, at the recollection of the

amorous declaration of the notary, had been unable to repress her hilarity.

"Pardon me, my dear sir," she replied, "but this notary is such a singular being, and they tell such odd stories about him; but, in truth, if his reputation as an honest man is not more deserved than his reputation as a religious man (and I declare that is hypocrisy) he is a great wretch."

"And he lives —"

"Rue du Sentier."

"I will call upon him. What you tell me confirms certain other suspicions."

"What suspicions?"

"From certain information as to the death of the brother of my poor friend, I should be almost tempted to believe that that unhappy man, instead of committing suicide, had been the victim of assassination."

"And what can make you suppose that?"

"Several reasons, which would be too long to detail to you now. I will leave you. Do not forget the promises of service which you have made me in your own and your husband's name."

"What, will you go without seeing Florestan?"

"You may suppose how painful this interview would be to me. I would brave it only in the hope of finding some information as to Madame de Fermont, being unwilling to neglect anything to discover her. Now, then, adieu!"

"Ah, you are pitiless!"

"Do you not know?"

"I know that your son was never in greater need of your advice."

"What, is he not rich — happy?"

"Yes, but he is ignorant of mankind. Blindly extravagant, because he is generous and confiding in everything, and everywhere and always free and noble, I fear people take advantage of his liberality. If you but

knew the nobleness of his heart! I have never dared to preach to him on the subject of his expenditure and want of care: in the first place, because I am as inconsiderate as himself, and next, in the second place, for other reasons; whilst you, on the contrary — "

Madame de Lucenay could not finish. The voice of Florestan de Saint-Remy was heard. He entered hastily into the cabinet next to the room in which they were, and, after having shut the door suddenly, he said, in a broken voice, to some one who accompanied him:

"But it is impossible."

"I tell you again," replied the clear and sharp voice of M. Badinot, "I tell you again that, if not, why, in four hours you will be apprehended; for, if he has not the cash forthwith, our man will lodge his complaint with the king's attorney-general; and you know the result of a forgery like this, — the galleys, the galleys, my poor dear vicomte!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE INTERVIEW.

It is impossible to paint the look which Madame de Lucenay and the father of Florestan exchanged at these terrible words, — "The galleys, the galleys, my poor dear vicomte!" The comte became deadly pale, and leant on the back of an armchair, whilst his knees seemed to sink beneath him. His venerable and respected name, — his name dishonoured by the man whom he accused of being the fruit of adultery!

The first feeling over, the contracted features of the old man, a threatening gesture which he made as he advanced towards the adjoining apartment, betrayed a resolution so alarming that Madame de Lucenay seized his hand, and said, in an accent of the most perfect conviction:

"He is innocent; I will swear it. Listen in silence."

The comte paused. He wished to believe what the duchess said to him, and she was entirely persuaded of Florestan's untarnished honour. To obtain fresh sacrifices from this woman, so blindly generous, — sacrifices which alone could save him from arrest, — and the prosecution of Jacques Ferrand, the vicomte had affirmed to Madame de Lucenay that, duped by a scoundrel from whom he had taken a forged bill in exchange, he ran the risk of being considered as the forger's accomplice, as having himself put this bill into circulation. Madame de Lucenay knew that the vicomte was imprudent, extravagant, reckless; but she never for an instant supposed

him capable, not only of a base or an infamous action, but even of the slightest indiscretion. Twice lending him considerable sums under very trying circumstances, she had wished to render him a friendly service, the vicomte expressly accepting these loans under the condition that he should return them; for there were persons, he said, who owed him double that amount; and his style of living made it seem probable.

Besides, Madame de Lucenay, yielding to the impulse of her natural kindness, had only thought of how she could be useful to Florestan, without ever reflecting as to whether or not he would ever return the sums thus advanced. He said so, and she did not doubt him; for, otherwise, would he have accepted such large amounts? When, then, she thus answered for Florestan's honour, entreating the old comte to listen to his son's conversation, the duchess thought that it was a question of the breach of honour of which the vicomte had declared himself the victim, and that he must stand forth completely exonerated in the eyes of his father.

"Again I declare," continued Florestan, in a troubled voice, "this Petit-Jean is a scamp; he assured me that he had no other bills in his hands but those which I received from him yesterday and three days previously. I believed this one was still in circulation, and only due three months hence, in London, at the house of Adams and Company."

"Yes, yes," said the sarcastic voice of Badinot, "I know, my dear vicomte, that you had managed the affair very cleverly, so that your forgeries would not be detected until you were a long way off; but you tried to 'do' those who were more cunning than yourself."

"And you dare to say that to me, now, rogue as you are," exclaimed Florestan, furious with anger, "when was it not you yourself who brought me into contact with the person who negotiated these bills?"

"Now, my dear aristocrat," replied Badinot, coolly,

"be cool! You very skilfully counterfeit commercial signatures; but, although they are so adroitly done, that is no reason why you should treat your friends with disagreeable familiarity; and, if you give way to unseemly fits of temper, I shall leave you, and then you may arrange this matter by yourself."

"And do you think it possible for a man to be calm in such a position as that in which I find myself? If what you say be true, if this charge be to-day preferred at the office of the attorney-general, I am lost!"

"It is really as I tell you, unless you have again recourse to your charming, blue-eyed Providence."

"Impossible!"

"Then make up your mind to the worst. It is a pity; it was the last bill; and for five and twenty thousand miserable francs (1,000*l.*) to go and take the air at Toulon is awkward, absurd, foolish! How could a clever fellow like you allow yourself to be thus taken aback?"

"What can I do? What can I do? Nothing here is my own, and I have not twenty louis in the world left."

"Your friends?"

"Why, I am in debt to every one who could lend me. Do you think else that I am such a fool as to have waited until to-day before I applied to them?"

"True; but, come, let us discuss the matter quietly; that is the best way of arriving at a reasonable conclusion. Just now, I wish to explain to you how you had been met by a party more clever than yourself, but you did not attend to me."

"Well, tell me now, if that will do any good."

"Let us recapitulate. You said to me two months since, 'I have bills on different banking-houses, at long dates, for a hundred and thirteen thousand francs (4,520*l.*), and, my dear Badinot, I wish you to find me the means of cashing them.'"

"Well, and then —"

"Listen: I asked you to let me see these bills; a certain something made me suspect that they were forged, although so admirably done. I did not suspect, it is true, that you were so expert in caligraphy; but, employing myself in looking after your fortune when you had no longer any fortune to look after, I found you were completely done up! I had arranged the deed by which your horses, your carriages, and the furniture of this house became the property of Boyer and Edwards. Thus, then, there was no wonder at my astonishment when I found you in possession of commercial securities to such a considerable amount, eh?"

"Never mind your astonishment, but come to the point."

"I am close upon it. I have enough experience or timidity not to be very anxious to mix myself up with affairs of this nature; I therefore advised you to consult a third party, who, no less clear-sighted than myself, suspected the trick you desired to play him."

"Impossible! He would not have discounted the bills if he had believed them forged."

"How much money down did you get for these hundred and thirteen thousand francs?"

"Twenty-five thousand francs in ready money, and the rest in small debts to collect."

"And how much of these small debts did you collect?"

"Nothing, as you very well know; they were fictitious; but still he risked twenty-five thousand francs."

"How green you are, my dear vicomte! Having my commission of a hundred louis to receive of you if the affair came off, I took very good care not to say a word to No. 3 as to the real state of your affairs. Thus he believed you entirely at your ease, and he, moreover, knew how you were adored by a certain great lady, immensely rich, who would not allow you to be left in

any difficulties, and thus he was quite sure of recovering at least as much as he advanced. He ran a risk, certainly, of losing something, but he also ran a chance of gaining very considerably; and his calculation was correct, for, the other day, you counted out to him a hundred thousand francs, good and sound, in order to retire the bill for fifty-eight thousand francs; and, yesterday, thirty thousand francs for the second; for that he contented himself, it is true, with the actual amount. How you raised these thirty thousand francs yesterday, devil fetch me, if I can guess! But you are a wonderful fellow! You see, now, that, to wind up the account, if Petit-Jean forces you to pay the last bill of twenty-five thousand francs, he will have received from you a hundred and fifty-five thousand francs for the twenty-five thousand which he originally handed to you. So I was quite right when I said that you had met with a person even more clever than yourself."

"But why did he say that this last bill which he presents to-day was negotiated?"

"That you might not take the alarm, he told you also that, except that of fifty-eight thousand francs, the others were in circulation; the first being paid, yesterday comes the second, and to-day the third."

"Scoundrel!"

"Listen: every one for himself; but let us talk coolly. This must prove to you that Petit-Jean (and, between ourselves, I should not be astonished to find out that, in spite of his sanctity, Jacques Ferrand went snacks in the speculation), this must prove, I say, that Petit-Jean, led on by your first payments, speculates on this last bill, as he has speculated on the others, quite certain that your friends will not allow you to be handed over to a court of assizes. It is for you to see whether or not these friendships are yet drained dry, or if there are yet a few more drops to be squeezed out; for if, in three hours, the twenty-five thousand francs are not

forthcoming, noble vicomte, you will be in the 'Stone Jug.'"

"Which you keep saying to me —"

"In order that you may thoroughly comprehend me, and agree, perhaps, to try and draw another feather from the wing of this generous duchess."

"I repeat, it is useless to think of such a thing. Any hope of finding twenty-five thousand francs in three hours, after the sacrifices she has already made, would be madness to expect."

"To please you, happy mortal, impossibilities would be attempted!"

"Oh, she has already tried impossibilities; for it was one to borrow a hundred thousand francs from her husband, and to succeed; but such phenomena are not expected twice in a lifetime. Now, my dear Badinot, up to this time you have had no cause to complain of me. I have always been generous. Try and obtain some delay from this wretch, Petit-Jean. You know very well I always find a way of recompensing those who serve me; and when once this last affair is got over I will try again, and you shall be satisfied."

"Petit-Jean is as inflexible as you are unreasonable."

"I!"

"Try once more to interest your generous friend in your sad fate. Devil take it! Why not tell her plump all about it; not, as you have already, that you have been the dupe of forgers, but that you are a forger yourself?"

"I will never make to her any such confession; it would be to shame myself for no advantage."

"Do you prefer, then, that she should learn the fact to-morrow by the *Gazette des Tribunaux*."

"I have three hours before me, and can fly."

"Where can you go without money? But look at the other side of the matter. This last forged bill retired, you will be again in a splendid position; you

will only have a few debts. Come, promise me that you will again speak to your duchess. You are such a fellow for the women! You know how to make yourself interesting in spite of your errors; and, let the worst come to the worst, they will like you a little the worse, or not at all; but they will extricate you from your mess. Come, come, see your lovely and loving friend once more. I will run to Petit-Jean, and I feel sure I shall get a respite of an hour or two."

"Hell! Must I, then, drink the draught of shame to the very dregs?"

"Come, come, good luck; be tender, passionate, charming. I will run to Petit-Jean; you will find me there until three o'clock; later than that will be useless; the attorney-general's office closes at four o'clock." And M. Badinot left the apartment.

When the door was closed, they heard Florestan exclaim in accents of the deepest despair: "*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*"

During this conversation, which unveiled to the comte the infamy of his son, and to Madame de Lucenay the infamy of the man she had so blindly loved, both had remained motionless, scarcely breathing, beneath this fearful disclosure. It would be impossible to depict the mute eloquence of the agonising scene which took place between this young lady and the comte when he had no longer any possible doubt as to Florestan's crime. Extending his arms to the room in which his son was, the old man smiled with bitterest sarcasm, casting an overwhelming look on Madame de Lucenay, which seemed to say, "And this is the man for whom you have braved all shame, — made every sacrifice! This is he whom you have reproached me for abandoning?"

The duchess understood the reproach, and, bowing her head, she felt all the weight of her shame. The lesson was terrible. By degrees, however, a haughty indignation succeeded to the cruel anxiety which had

contracted the features of Madame de Lucenay. The inexcusable faults of this lady were at least palliat d by the sincerity and disinterestedness of her love, by the boldness of her devotion and the boundlessness of her generosity, by the frankness of her character, and by her inexorable aversion from all that was contemptible and base.

Still too young, too handsome, too *recherché*, to feel the humiliation of having been merely made a tool of, when once the feeling of love was suddenly crushed within her, this haughty and decided woman felt no longer hatred or anger, but instantaneously, and without any transition, a deadly disgust, an icy disdain, at once destroyed all that affection hitherto so strong. She was no longer the mistress, unworthily deceived by her lover, but the lady of high blood and rank detecting a man of her circle to be a swindler and a forger, and driving him forth. Supposing that there were even some extenuating circumstances for the ignominy of Florestan, Madame de Lucenay would not have admitted them ; for, in her estimation, the man who crossed certain bounds of honour, whether from vice, weakness, or persuasion, no longer had an existence in her eyes, honourable demeanour being with her a question of existence or non-existence. The only painful feeling which the duchess experienced was excited by the terrible effect which this unexpected revelation produced on her old friend, the comte.

For some moments he seemed neither to see nor hear ; his eyes were fixed, his head bowed, his arms hanging by his side, his face livid as death ; whilst from time to time a convulsive sigh heaved his breast. With such a man, as resolute as energetic, such a condition was more alarming than the most violent transports of anger. Madame de Lucenay regarded him with great uneasiness.

" Courage, my dear friend," she said to him, in a low voice, " for you, — for me, — for this man, — I know what remains for me to do."

The old man looked steadfastly at her, and then, as if aroused from his stupor by a violent internal commotion, he raised his head, his features assumed a menacing appearance, and, forgetting that his son could hear him, he exclaimed:

"And I, too, for you, — for me, — and for this man, — I know what remains for me to do."

"Who is there?" inquired Florestan, surprised.

Madame de Lucenay, fearing to find herself in the vicomte's presence, disappeared by the little door, and descended the secret staircase. Florestan having again asked who was there, and receiving no reply, entered the salon. He found the comte there alone. The old man's long beard had so greatly altered him, and he was so miserably clad, that his son, who had not seen him for several years, not recognising him at the moment, advanced towards him with a menacing air.

"What are you doing there? Who are you?"

"The husband of that woman!" replied the comte, pointing to the picture of Madame de Saint-Remy.

"My father!" exclaimed Florestan, recoiling in alarm, as he recalled the features of the comte, so long forgotten.

Standing erect, with threatening air, angry look, his forehead scarlet, the comte looked down upon his son, who, with his head bent down, dared not raise his eyes towards him. Still, M. de Saint-Remy, for some motive, made a violent effort to remain calm, and conceal his real feelings and resentment.

"My father!" said Florestan, half choked. "You were there?"

"I was there."

"You heard, then?"

"All!"

"Ah!" cried the vicomte, in agony, and hiding his face in his hands.

There was a minute's silence. Florestan, at first as

much astonished as annoyed at the unexpected appearance of his father, began to reflect upon what advantage he could derive from this incident.

"All is not lost," he said to himself; "my father's presence is a stroke of fate. He knows all; he will not have his name dishonoured. He is not rich, but he must possess more than twenty-five thousand francs. A little skill, and I may leave my duchess at peace, and be saved!" Then, giving to his handsome features an expression of grief and dejection, moistening his eye with the tears of repentance, assuming his most touching tone of voice, he exclaimed, clasping his hands with a gesture of despair:

"Ah, father, I am indeed wretched! After so many years, — to see you — at such a moment! I must appear to you most culpable; but deign to listen to me! I beseech you, allow me, not to justify myself, but to explain to you my conduct! Will you, my father?"

M. de Saint-Remy made no reply; his features remained rigid; but, seating himself, his chin leaning on the palm of his hand, he contemplated the vicomte in silence. Had Florestan known the motives which filled the mind of his father with fury and vengeance, alarmed by the apparent composure of the comte, he would not, doubtless, have tried to dupe him. But, ignorant of the suspicions respecting the legitimacy of his birth, and of his mother's lapse of virtue, he had no doubt of the success of his deceit, thinking his father, who was very proud of his name, was capable of making any sacrifice rather than allow it to be dishonoured.

"My father," resumed Florestan, timidly, "allow me to endeavour, not to exculpate myself, but to tell you by what a series of involuntary temptations I have done, in spite of myself, — such — an infamous action."

The vicomte took his father's silence for tacit consent, and continued:

"When I had the misfortune to lose my mother — my

poor mother! — I was alone, without advice or support. Master of a considerable fortune, used to luxury from my cradle, it became to me a necessity. Ignorant how difficult it is to earn money, I was immeasurably prodigal. Unfortunately, my expenses, foolish as they were, were remarkable for their elegance. By my taste, I eclipsed men ten times richer than myself. This first success intoxicated me, and I became a man of extravagance, as one becomes a man of arms, or a statesman. Yes, I liked luxury, not from vulgar ostentation, but I liked it as a painter loves his art. Like every artist, I was jealous of my work, and my work was to me luxury. I sacrificed everything to its perfection. I wished to have it beautiful and complete in everything, from my stable to my drawing-room, from my coat to my house. I wished my life to be the emblem of taste and elegance. In fact, as an artist, I sought the applause of the mob and the admiration of the élite. This success is rare, but I acquired it."

As he spake, Florestan's features gradually lost their hypocritical assumption, and his eyes kindled with enthusiasm. He looked in his father's face, and, thinking it was somewhat softened, continued:

"Oracle and regulator of the world, my praise or blame were law: I was quoted, copied, boasted of, admired, and that by the best circle in Paris, which is to say in Europe — in the world. The women participated in the general enthusiasm, and the loveliest contended for the pleasure of being invited to certain fêtes which I gave, and everywhere wonder was expressed at the incomparable elegance and taste displayed at these fêtes, which millionaires could not equal. In fine, I was the monarch of fashion. This word will tell you all, my father, if you comprehend it."

"I do comprehend it, and I am sure that at the galleys you will invent some refined elegance in your fashion of wearing your chain that will become the mode

in your gang, and will be called *à la* Saint-Remy," said the old man, with cutting irony, adding, "and Saint-Remy, — that is my name!" And again he was silent.

Florestan had need of all his self-control to conceal the wound which this bitter sarcasm inflicted. He continued in a more humble tone:

"Alas! Father, it is not from pride that I revive the recollection of my success, for, I repeat to you, it is that success which has undone me. Sought, envied, and flattered, not by interested parasites, but by persons much superior in position to myself, I no longer calculated my fortune must be expended in a few years; that I did not heed. Could I renounce this favourite, dazzling life, in which pleasures succeeded pleasures, every kind of intoxication to every kind of enchantment? Ah, if you knew, father, what it is to be hailed as the hero of the day, to hear the murmur which greets your entrance into the salon, to hear the women say, 'That is he! There he is!' — oh, if you knew — "

"I know," said the old man, without moving from his attitude, — "I know. Yes, the other day, in a public place, there was a crowd; suddenly a murmur was heard, like that which greets you when you enter some place; then the women's eyes were all turned eagerly on a very handsome young man, just as they are turned towards you, and they pointed him out to one another, saying, 'That's he! There he is!' just as if they were directing attention to you."

"And this man, my father?"

"Was a forger they were conveying to gaol."

"Ah!" exclaimed Florestan, with concentrated rage. Then affecting the deepest affliction, he added, "My father, you are pitiless, — what shall I then say to you? I do not seek to deny my errors, I only desire to explain to you the fatal infatuation which has caused them. Well, then, even if you should overwhelm me still with your bitterest sarcasms, I will endeavour to go through

with this confession, — I will endeavour to make you comprehend this feverish excitement which has destroyed me, because then, perchance, you may pity me, — yes, for there is pity for a madman, and I was mad! Shutting my eyes, I abandoned myself to the dazzling whirl into which I was drawn, and drew with me the most charming women, the most delightful men. How could I check myself? As easily say to the poet who exhausts himself, and whose genius preys upon his health, 'Pause in the midst of the inspiration which urges you!' No! He could not — I could not, abdicate the royalty which I exercised, and return shamed, ruined, and mocked at, into the unknown mob, giving this triumph to those who envied me, and whom, until then, I had defied, controlled, overpowered! No! No! I could not, voluntarily, at least.

"Then came the fatal day, when, for the first time, money failed me. I was surprised as much as if such a moment never could have arrived. Yet I had still my horses, my carriages, the furniture of this house. When my debts were paid there would, perhaps, still remain to me about sixty thousand francs. What could I do in such misery? It was then, father, that I made my first step in the path of disgrace; until this time I was honourable, — I had only spent what belonged to me, but then I began to incur debts which I had no chance of paying. I sold all I had to two of my domestics in order to pay my debt to them, and to be enabled to continue for six months longer, in spite of my creditors, to enjoy the luxury which intoxicated me.

"To supply my play debts and extravagant outlay I first borrowed of the Jews, then, to pay the Jews, of my friends, then, to pay my friends, of my mistresses. These resources exhausted, there was another period of my life; from an honest man I became a gambler, but, as yet, I was not criminal — I still hesitated — I desired to take a violent resolution. I had proved in several

duels that I did not fear death. I determined to kill myself!"

"Ah! Bah! Really?" said the comte, with fierce irony.

"You do not believe me, father?"

"It was too soon or too late!" replied the old man, still unmoved, and in the same attitude.

Florestan, believing that he had moved his father by speaking to him of his project for committing suicide, thought it necessary to increase the effect by a *coup de théâtre*. He opened a drawer, took from it a small bottle of greenish glass, and said to the comte, depositing it on the table:

"An Italian quack sold me this poison."

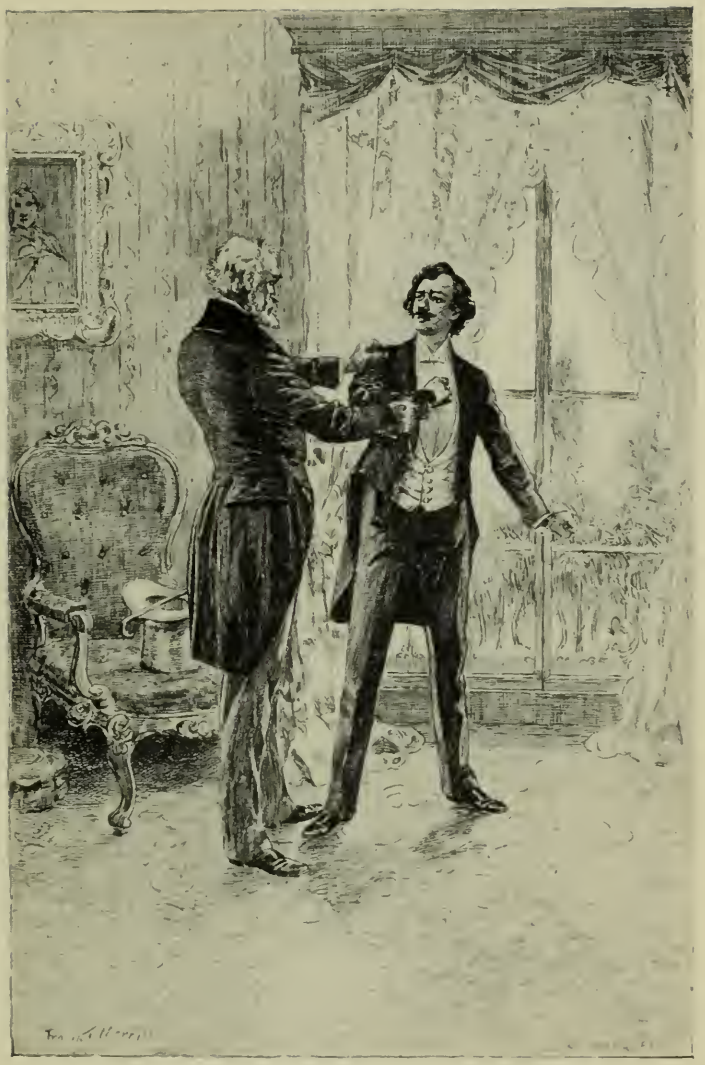
"And was this poison for yourself?" said the old man, still having his chin in the palm of his hand.

Florestan understood the force of the remark, his features expressed real indignation; for this time he spoke the truth. One day he took it into his head to kill himself, — an ephemeral fancy! Persons of his stamp are usually too cowardly to make up their minds calmly, and without witnesses, to the death which they face as a point of honour in a duel. He therefore exclaimed, with an accent of truth:

"I have fallen very low, but not so low as that. It was for myself that I reserved this poison."

"And then were afraid of it?" asked the comte, without changing his posture.

"I confess I recoiled before this trying extremity, — nothing was yet desperate. The persons to whom I owed money were rich and could wait. At my age, and with my connections, I hoped for a moment, if not to repair my fortunes, at least to acquire for myself an honourable position, an independence which would have supplied my present situation. Many of my friends, perhaps less qualified than myself, had made rapid progress in diplomacy. I had ambition. I had but to make it known,



and I was attached to the legation to Gerolstein. Unfortunately, a few days after this nomination, a gaming debt, contracted with a man who detested me, placed me in a cruel dilemma. I had exhausted my last resources. A fatal idea flashed across my mind. Believing that I was assured of impunity, I committed an infamous action. You see, my father, I conceal nothing from you. I avow the ignominy of my conduct, — I do not seek to extenuate anything. Two alternatives are now before me, and I am equally inclined to either. The one is to kill myself, and leave your name dishonoured; for if I do not pay this very day the twenty-five thousand francs, the accusation is made, and all is made public, and, dead or alive, I am disgraced. The second is to throw myself into your arms, father, to say to you, 'Save your son, — save your name from infamy;' and I swear to you to depart for Africa to-morrow, and die a soldier's death, or return to you completely restored in reputation. What I say to you, father, is true, — in face of the extremity which overwhelms me, I have no other resource. Decide: shall I die covered with shame, or, thanks to you, live to repair my fault? These are not the threats of a young man. I am twenty-five; I bear your name, and I have sufficient courage either to kill myself, or to become a soldier; for I will not go to the galleys."

The comte rose from his seat, saying:

"I do not desire to have my name dishonoured."

"Oh, my father!" exclaimed the vicomte, with warmth, and was about to embrace his father, when the old man, repressing his enthusiasm, said:

"You are expected until three o'clock at the man's house who has the forged bill?"

"Yes, father, and it is now two o'clock."

"Let us go into your cabinet; give me writing materials."

"They are here, father."

The comte sat down and wrote, with a firm hand:

"I undertake to pay this evening, at ten o'clock, the twenty-five thousand francs which my son owes.

"COMTE DE SAINT-REMY."

"Your creditor merely wants his money; my guarantee will obtain a further delay. Let him go to M. Dupont, the banker, at No. 7 in the Rue Richelieu, and he will assure him of the validity of this promise."

"Oh, my father! How can I ever —"

"Expect me this evening; at ten o'clock I will bring the money. Let your creditor be here."

"Yes, father, and the day after I will set out for Africa. You shall see that I am not ungrateful! Then, perhaps, when I am again restored to honour you will accept my thanks?"

"You owe me nothing. I have said that my name shall not be dishonoured again; nor shall it be," said M. de Saint-Remy, in reply, taking up his cane, and moving towards the door.

"My father, at least shake hands with me!" said Florestan.

"Here this evening at ten o'clock," said the comte, refusing his hand.

"Saved!" exclaimed Florestan, joyously, — "saved!" Then he continued, after a moment's reflection: "Saved — almost — no matter — it is always so. Perhaps this evening I shall tell him of the other thing. He is in the vein, and will not allow a first sacrifice to become useless for lack of a second. Yet why should I tell him? Who will ever know it? Yet, if nothing should be discovered, I shall keep the money he will give me to pay this last debt. I had some work to move him. The bitterness of his sarcasms made me suspicious of his good resolution; but my threat of suicide, the fear of seeing his name dishonoured, decided him. That was the way to hit him. No doubt he is not so poor as he appears to be. But his arrival was indeed a godsend. Now, then, for the man of law!"

He rang the bell, and M. Boyer appeared.

"How was it that you did not inform me that my father was here? Really, this is most negligent."

"Twice I endeavoured to address your lordship when you came in by the garden gate with M. Badinot, but your lordship made me a sign with your hand not to interrupt you. I did not venture to insist. I should be very much grieved if your lordship should impute negligence to me."

"Very well. Desire Edwards to harness Orion or Ploughboy in the cabriolet immediately."

M. Boyer made a respectful bow. As he was about to quit the room, some one knocked. He looked at the vicomte with an inquiring air.

"Come in!" said Florestan.

A second *valet de chambre* appeared, bearing in his hand a small silver-gilt waiter. M. Boyer took hold of the waiter with a kind of jealous haste, and presented it to the vicomte, who took from it a thick packet, sealed with black wax.

The two servants withdrew discreetly.

Florestan broke open the envelope. It contained twenty-five thousand francs in treasury bills, but not a word of writing.

"Decidedly," he exclaimed, in a joyful tone, "the day is propitious! Saved this time, and at this moment completely saved! I will run to the jeweller; and yet," he added, "perhaps — no — let us wait — he cannot have any suspicion of me. Twenty-five thousand francs is a pleasant sum to have by one! *Pardieu!* I was a fool ever to doubt the luck of my star; at the moment when it seemed most obscure, has it not burst forth more brilliant than ever? But where does this money come from? The writing of the address is unknown to me. Let me examine the seal, — the cipher. Yes, yes, I cannot mistake; an N and an L, — it is Clotilde! How could she know? And not a word, — that's

strange! How very opportune, though! Ah, *mon Dieu!* now I remember. I had an appointment with her this morning. That Badinot's threats drove it out of my head. I forgot Clotilde. After having waited for me down-stairs, no doubt she went away; and this is, unquestionably, a delicate way of making me understand that she fears I may forget her through some pecuniary embarrassment. Yes, it is an indirect reproach that I have not applied to her as usual. Good Clotilde! Always the same, — generous as a queen! What a pity I was ever driven to ask her, — her still so handsome! I sometimes regret it, but I only did it in a direful extremity, and on sheer compulsion."

"Your lordship's cabriolet is at the door," said M. Boyer, on entering the room.

"Who brought this letter?" Florestan inquired.

"I do not know, my lord."

"Well, I will ask below. But tell me, was there no one in the ground floor?" asked the vicomte, looking significantly at Boyer.

"There is no one there now, my lord."

"I was not mistaken," thought Florestan; "Clotilde waited for me, and is now gone."

"If your lordship would have the goodness to grant me two minutes," said Boyer.

"Speak, but be quick!"

"Edwards and myself have learnt that the Duc de Montbrison is desirous of forming an establishment. If your lordship would but just be so kind to propose your own ready furnished, with the stable in first-rate order, it would be a most admirable opportunity for Edwards and myself to get the whole off our hands, and, perhaps, for your lordship a good reason for disposing of them."

"*Pardieu!* Boyer, you are right. As for me, I should prefer such an arrangement. I will see Montbrison, and speak to him. What are your terms?"

"Your lordship will easily understand that we are

desirous of profiting as much as possible by your generosity."

"And turn your bargain to the best advantage? Nothing can be plainer! Let us see, — what's the price?"

"The whole, two hundred and sixty thousand francs (10,400*l.*), my lord."

"And you and Edwards will thus clear —"

"About forty thousand francs (1,600*l.*), my lord."

"A very nice sum! But so much the better, for, after all, I am very much satisfied with you, and, if I had to make my will, I should have bequeathed that sum to you and Edwards."

And the vicomte went out, first to call on his creditor, then on Madame de Lucenay, whom he did not suspect of having been present at his conversation with Badinot.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SEARCH.

The Hôtel de Lucenay was one of those royal residences of the Faubourg St. Germain, which the space employed, and, as it were, lost, make so vast. A modern house might, with ease, be contained in the limits devoted to the staircase of one of these palaces, and a whole quarter might be built in the extent they occupy.

About nine o'clock in the evening of this day the two vast folding-doors of this hôtel opened on the arrival of a magnificent chariot, which, after having taken a dashing turn in the spacious courtyard, stopped before the large covered flight of steps which led to the first antechamber. Whilst the hoofs of two powerful and high-couraged horses sounded on the echoing pavement, a gigantic footman opened the door, emblazoned with armorial bearings, and a young man alighted gracefully from this brilliant carriage, and no less gracefully walked up the five or six steps of the entrance. This young man was the Vicomte de Saint-Remy.

On leaving his creditor, who, satisfied with the undertaking of Florestan's father, had granted the required delay, and was to come and receive his money at ten o'clock in the Rue de Chaillot, M. de Saint-Remy had gone to Madame de Lucenay's, to thank her for the fresh service she had rendered him, and, not having seen the duchess during the morning, he came triumphant, certain of finding her in *prima sera*, the hour which she constantly reserved for him.

By the attention of the footmen in the antechamber, who hastened to open the glass door as soon as they saw Florestan's carriage, by the profoundly respectful air with which the rest of the livery all rose as the vicomte passed by, and by certain, yet almost imperceptible touches, it was evident that here was the second, or, rather, the real master of the house.

When the Duc de Lucenay returned home, with his umbrella in his hand and his feet protected by clumsy goloshes (he hated going out in a carriage in the daytime), the same domestic evolutions were gone through with similar respect; still, in the eyes of a keen observer, there was a vast difference between the reception accorded to the husband and that reserved for the lover.

A corresponding attention displayed itself in the footman's waiting-room when Florestan entered it, and one of the valets instantly arose to announce him to Madame de Lucenay.

The vicomte had never been more joyous, never felt himself more at his ease, more confident of himself, more assured of conquest. The victory he had obtained over his father in the morning, the fresh proof of attachment on the part of Madame de Lucenay, the joy at having escaped, as it were, by a miracle, from a terrible situation, his renewed confidence in his star, gave his handsome features an expression of boldness and good humour which rendered it still more captivating.

In fact, he had never felt himself more himself. And he was right. Never had his slender and graceful figure displayed a finer carriage, never had his look been more elevated, never had his pride been more deliciously tickled by the thought, "The great lady — the mistress of this palace is mine — is at my feet! This very morning she waited for me in my own house!"

Florestan had given way to these excessively vainglorious reflections as he traversed three or four apartments, which led to a small room in which the duchess

usually sat. A last look at himself in a glass which he passed completed the excellent opinion which Florestan had of himself. The *valet de chambre* opened the folding-doors of the salon, and announced, "Monsieur the Vicomte de Saint-Remy!"

It is impossible to paint the astonishment and indignation of the duchess. She believed the comte had not concealed from his son that she also had overheard all.

We have already said that, on discovering Florestan's infamy, Madame de Lucenay's love, suddenly quenched, had changed into the most frigid disdain. We have also said that, in the midst of her errors, her frailties, Madame de Lucenay had preserved pure and intact her feelings of rectitude, honour, and chivalric frankness, whose strength and requirements were excessively strong. She possessed the better qualities of her faults, the virtues of her vices.

Treating love as cavalierly as a man treats it, she pushed as far, nay, further, than a man, devotion, generosity, courage, and, above all, intense horror of all baseness. Madame de Lucenay, being about to go to a party in the evening, was, although without her diamonds, dressed with her accustomed taste and magnificence; and her splendid costume, the rouge she wore without attempt at concealment, like a court lady, up to her eyelids, her beauty, which was especially brilliant at candle-light, her figure of a goddess walking in the clouds, rendered still more striking that noble air which no one displayed to greater advantage than she did, and which she carried, if requisite, to a height of insolence that was overwhelming.

We know the haughty and resolute disposition of the duchess, and we may imagine her physiognomy, her look, when the vicomte, advancing towards her, conceited, smiling, confident, said, in a tone of love:

"Dearest Clotilde, how good you are! How you —"

The vicomte could not finish. The duchess was

seated, and had not risen; but her gesture, her glance, betokened contempt, at once so calm and crushing that Florestan stopped short. He could not utter another word, nor advance another step. He had never before seen Madame de Lucenay under this aspect. He could not believe that it was the same woman, whom he had always found gentle, tender, and passionately submissive; for nothing is more humble, more timid, than a determined woman in the presence of the man whom she loves and who controls her.

His first surprise past, Florestan was ashamed of his weakness; his habitual audacity resumed its ascendency, and, making a step towards Madame de Lucenay in order to take her hand, he said, in his most insinuating tone:

"Clotilde, what ails you? I never saw you look so lovely, and yet —"

"Really, this is too impudent!" exclaimed the duchess, recoiling with such disgust and hauteur that Florestan was again overcome with surprise.

Resuming some assurance, he said to her:

"Will you, at least, Clotilde, tell me the cause of this change, sudden, singular as it is? What have I done? How have I offended?"

Without making any reply, Madame de Lucenay looked at him, as is vulgarly said, from head to foot, with so insulting an expression that Florestan felt red with the anger which displayed itself upon his brow, and exclaimed:

"I am aware, madame, that it is thus you habitually break off. Is it a rupture that you now desire?"

"The question is singular!" said Madame de Lucenay, with a sarcastic laugh. "Learn, sir, that when a lackey robs me, I do not break with him, I turn him away."

"Madame!"

"Oh, a truce to this!" said the duchess, in a stern and peremptory tone. "Your presence disgusts me! Why are you here? Have you not had your money?"

"It is true, then, as I guessed, the twenty-five thousand francs —"

"Your last forgery is withdrawn, is it not? The honour of your family's name is saved, — that is well, — go!"

"Ah! believe me —"

"I very much regret that money, for it might have succoured so many honest families; but it was necessary to think of the shame to your father and to myself."

"So then, Clotilde, you know all? Ah, then, now nothing is left me but to die!" exclaimed Florestan, in a most pathetic and despairing tone.

A burst of derisive laughter from the duchess hailed this tragic exclamation, and she added, between two fits of fresh hilarity:

"I could never have believed infamy could appear so ridiculous!"

"Madame!" cried Florestan, his features contracted with rage.

The two folding-doors opened with a loud noise, and M. le Duc de Montbrison was announced.

In spite of his self-command, Florestan could scarcely repress the violence of his resentment, which any man more observing than the duke must certainly have perceived.

M. de Montbrison was scarcely eighteen years of age. Let our readers imagine a most engaging countenance, like that of a young girl, white and red, whose vermilion lips and downy chin were slightly shaded by a nascent beard. Let them add to this large brown eyes, as yet timid, but which in time would gleam like a falcon's, a figure as graceful as that of the duchess herself, and then, perhaps, they may have some idea of this young duke, the Cherubino as complete in idea as ever countess or waiting-maid decked in a woman's cap, after having remarked the ivory whiteness of his neck.

The vicomte had the weakness or the audacity to remain.

"How kind of you, Conrad, to think of me this evening!" said Madame de Lucenay, in a most affectionate voice, and extending her hand to the young duke, who was about to shake hands with his cousin, but Clotilde raised her hand a little, and said to him gaily:

"Kiss it, cousin, — you have your gloves on."

"Pardon me, my dear cousin," said the young man, as he applied his lips to the naked and charming hand that was offered to him.

"What are you going to do this evening, Conrad?" inquired Madame de Lucenay, without seeming to take the slightest notice in the world of Florestan.

"Nothing, cousin; when I leave you, I shall go to the club."

"Indeed you shall not; you shall accompany us, M. de Lucenay and me, to Madame de Senneval's; she gives a party, and has frequently asked me to introduce you to her."

"I shall be but too happy."

"Then, too, I must tell you frankly that I don't like to see you begin so early with your habits and tastes for clubs. You are possessed of everything necessary in order to be everywhere welcomed, and even sought after, in the world, and you ought, therefore, to mix with it as much as possible."

"Yes, you are right, cousin."

"And as I am on the footing of a grandmother with you, my dear Conrad, I am determined to exact a great deal from you. You are emancipated, it is true, but I believe you will want a guardian for a long time to come, and you must, therefore, consider me in that light."

"Most joyfully, happily, cousin!" said the young duke, emphatically.

It is impossible to describe the mute rage of Florestan,

who was standing up, and leaning with his elbow on the mantelpiece. Neither the duke nor Clotilde paid the slightest attention to him. Knowing the rapidity with which Madame de Lucenay decided, he imagined she was pushing her boldness and contempt so far as to commence at once, and in his presence, a regular flirtation with the Duc de Montbrison.

It was not so. The duchess felt for her cousin nothing beyond a truly maternal affection, having almost seen him born. But the young duke was so handsome, and seemed so happy at the agreeable reception of his cousin, that the jealousy, or, rather, pride of Florestan was aroused. His heart writhed beneath the cruel wounds of envy, excited by Conrad de Montbrison, who, rich and handsome, was beginning so splendidly that life of pleasures, enjoyments, and fêtes, from which he, ruined, undone, despised, dishonoured, was expelled.

M. de Saint-Remy was brave with that bravery of the head, if we may so call it, which will urge a man, by anger or by vanity, to face a duel. But, vitiated and corrupted, he had not the courage of the heart which triumphs over bad inclinations, or which, at least, gives the energy which enables a man to escape infamy by a voluntary death. Furious at the bitter contempt of the duchess, believing he saw a successor in the young duke, M. de Saint-Remy resolved to confront Madame de Lucenay with all insolence, and, if need were, to seek a quarrel with Conrad.

The duchess, irritated at Florestan's audacity, did not look towards him, and M. de Montbrison, in his anxious attention to his cousin, forgetting something of his high breeding, had not saluted or spoken a word to the vicomte, with whom he was acquainted. The latter, advancing to Conrad, whose back was towards him, touched his arm lightly, and said, in a dry and ironical tone:

"Good evening, sir; a thousand pardons for not having observed you before."

M. de Montbrison, perceiving that he had really failed in politeness, turned around instantly, and said cordially to the vicomte:

"Really, sir, I am ashamed; but I hope that my cousin, who caused my forgetfulness, will be my excuse, and —"

"Conrad," interposed the duchess, immeasurably annoyed at Florestan's impudence, persisting as he did in remaining, as it were, to brave her, — "Conrad, that will do; make no apologies; it is not worth while."

M. de Montbrison, believing that his cousin was reproaching him in joke for being somewhat too formal, said, in a gay tone, to the vicomte, who was livid with rage:

"I will not say more, sir, since my cousin forbids me. You see her guardianship has begun."

"And will not stop when it begins, my dear sir, be assured of that. Thus, with this notice (which Madame la Duchesse will hasten to fulfil, I have no doubt) — with this notice, I say, I have it in my mind to make you a proposal."

"To me, sir?" said Conrad, beginning to take offence at the sardonic tone of Florestan.

"To you yourself. I leave in a few days for the legation to Gerolstein, to which I am attached. I wish, therefore, to get my house, completely furnished, and my stable, entirely arranged, off my hands; and you might find it a suitable arrangement;" and the vicomte insolently emphasised his last words, looking Madame de Lucenay full in the face. "It would be very piquant, would it not, Madame la Duchesse?"

"I do not understand you, sir," said M. de Montbrison, more and more astonished.

"I will tell you, Conrad, why you cannot accept the offer that is made you," said Clotilde.

"And why, Madame la Duchesse, cannot the duke accept my offer?"

"My dear Conrad, what is offered you for sale is already sold to others. So, you understand, you would have the inconvenience of being robbed just as if you were in a wood."

Florestan bit his lips with rage.

"Take care, madame!" he cried.

"What, threats! and here, sir?" exclaimed Conrad.

"Pooh, pooh! Conrad, pay no attention," said Madame de Lucenay, taking a lozenge from a sweetmeat box with the utmost composure; "a man of honour ought not and cannot have any future communication with that person. If he likes, I will tell you why."

A tremendous explosion would no doubt have occurred, when the two folding-doors again opened, and the Duc de Lucenay entered, noisily, violently, hurriedly, as was "his usual custom in the afternoon," as well as the forenoon.

"Ah, my dear! What, dressed already?" said he to his wife. "Why, how surprising! Quite astonishing! Good evening, Saint-Remy; good evening, Conrad. Ah, you see the most miserable of men; that is to say, I neither sleep nor eat, but am completely 'done up.' Can't reconcile myself to it. Poor D'Harville, what an event!" And M. de Lucenay threw himself back in a sort of small sofa with two backs, and, crossing his left knee over his right, took his foot in his hand, whilst he continued to utter the most distressing exclamations.

The excitement of Conrad and Florestan had time to calm down, without being perceived by M. de Lucenay, who was the least clear-sighted man in the world.

Madame de Lucenay, not from embarrassment, for she was never embarrassed, as we know, but because

Florestan's presence was as disgusting as it was insupportable, said to the duke:

"We are ready to go as soon as you please. I am going to introduce Conrad to Madame de Senneval."

"No, no, no!" cried the duke, letting go his foot to seize one of the cushions, on which he struck violently with his two fists, to the great alarm of Clotilde, who, at the sudden cries of her husband, started from her chair.

"Monsieur, what ails you?" she inquired; "you frighten me exceedingly."

"No," replied the duke, thrusting the cushion from him, rising suddenly, and walking up and down with rapid strides and gesticulations, "I cannot get over the idea of the death of poor dear D'Harville; can you, Saint-Remy?"

"Indeed, it was a frightful event!" said the vicomte, who, with hatred and rage in his heart, kept his eye on M. de Montbrison; but this latter, after the last words of his cousin, turned away from a man so deeply degraded, not from want of feeling, but from pride.

"For goodness' sake, my lord," said the duchess to her husband, "do not regret the loss of M. d'Harville in so noisy and really so singular a manner. Ring, if you please for my carriage."

"Yes, it is really true," said M. de Lucenay, seizing the bell-rope, "really true that, three days ago, he was full of life and health, and, to-day, what remains of him? Nothing! Nothing! Nothing!"

These three last exclamations were accompanied by three such violent pulls that the bell-rope, which the duke held in his hand whilst he was gesticulating, broke away from the upper spring, fell on a candelabra filled with lighted wax candles, knocked two of them out of the sconces, one of which, falling on the mantelpiece, broke a lovely little cup of old Sèvres china; whilst the other, falling on the ground, rolled on a fur hearth rug,

which took flame, but was soon extinguished under Conrad's foot.

At the same moment, two *valets de chambre*, summoned by the furious ringing, entered hastily, and found M. de Lucenay with the bell-rope in his hand, the duchess laughing heartily at this ridiculous fall of the wax lights, and M. de Montbrison sharing her mirth. M. de Saint-Remy alone did not laugh. M. de Lucenay, quite accustomed to such accidents, preserved his usual seriousness, and, throwing the bell-rope to one of the men, said:

"The duchess's carriage."

Clotilde, having somewhat recovered her composure, said:

"Really, my lord, there is no man in the world but yourself capable of exciting laughter at so lamentable an event."

"Lamentable! Say fearful. Why, now, only yesterday, I was recollecting how many persons in my own family I would rather should have died than poor D'Harville. First, there's my nephew, D'Emberval, who stutters so annoyingly; then there's your Aunt Mérinville, who is always talking about her nerves and her headache, and who always gobbles up every day, whilst she is waiting for dinner, a mess of broth like a porter's wife. Are you very fond of your Aunt Mérinville?"

"Really, my lord, have you lost your wits?" said the duchess, shrugging her shoulders.

"It's true enough, though," continued the duke; "one would give twenty indifferent persons for one friend; eh, Saint-Remy?"

"Unquestionably."

"It is the old story of the tailor over again. Do you know it, Conrad, — the story of the tailor?"

"No, cousin."

"You will understand the allegory at once. A tailor

was going to be hanged; he was the only tailor in the village. What were the inhabitants to do? They said to the judge, 'Please your judgeship, we have only one tailor, and we have three shoemakers; if it is all the same to you, please to hang one of the three shoemakers in the place of the tailor, for two shoemakers are enough.' Do you understand the allegory, Conrad?"

"Yes, cousin."

"And you, Saint-Remy?"

"Quite."

"Her grace's carriage!" said one of the servants.

"But, I say, why haven't you put on your diamonds?" asked M. de Lucenay, abruptly; "with that dress they would look remarkably well."

Saint-Remy shuddered.

"For the one poor time we are going out together," continued the duke, "you might have done us the honour to wear your diamonds. The duchess's diamonds are particularly fine. Did you ever see them, Saint-Remy?"

"Yes, he knows them well enough!" said Clotilde; and then she added, "Your arm, Conrad."

M. de Lucenay followed the duchess with Saint-Remy, who could scarcely repress his anger.

"Aren't you coming with us to the Sennevals, Saint-Remy?" inquired M. de Lucenay.

"No, impossible," he replied, briefly.

"By the way, Saint-Remy, there's Madame de Senneval, too, — what, do I say one? There's two — whom I would willingly sacrifice, for her husband is also on my list."

"What list?"

"That of the people whom I should not have cared to see die, provided D'Harville had been left to us."

At the moment when they were in the anteroom, and M. de Montbrison was helping the duchess on with her mantle, M. de Lucenay, addressing his cousin, said to him:

"Since you are coming with us, Conrad, desire your carriage to follow ours; unless you will decide on coming, Saint-Remy, and then you shall take me, and I will tell you another story quite as good as that of the tailor."

"Thank you," said Saint-Remy, dryly, "I cannot accompany you."

"Well, then, good night, my dear fellow. Have you and my wife quarrelled, for she is getting into her carriage without saying a word to you?"

And at this moment, the duchess's berline having drawn up at the steps, she entered it.

"Now, cousin," said Conrad, waiting for M. de Lucenay with an air of deference.

"Get in! Get in!" said the duke, who had stopped a moment, and, from the door, was contemplating the elegant equipage of the vicomte. "Are those your grays, Saint-Remy?"

"Yes."

"And your jolly-looking Edwards! He's what I call a right sort of coachman. How well he has his horses in hand! To do justice, there is no one who, like Saint-Remy, does things in such devilish high style!"

"My dear fellow, Madame de Lucenay and your cousin are waiting for you," said M. de Saint-Remy, with bitterness.

"*Pardieu!* and that's true. What a forgetful rascal I am! *Au revoir*, Saint-Remy. Ah, I forgot," said the duke, stopping half way down the steps, "if you have nothing better to do, come and dine with us to-morrow. Lord Dudley has sent us some grouse from Scotland, and they are out-of-the-way things, you know. You'll come, won't you?" And the duke sprang into the carriage which contained his wife and Conrad.

Saint-Remy remained alone on the steps, and saw the carriage drive away. His own then drove up. He got into it, casting on that house which he had so often

entered as master, and which now he so ignominiously quitted, a look of anger, hatred, and despair.

"Home!" he said, abruptly.

"To the hôtel!" said the footman to Edwards, as he closed the door.

We may imagine how bitter and desolating were Saint-Remy's thoughts as he returned to his house. At the moment when he reached it, Boyer, who awaited him at the portico, said to him:

"M. le Comte is above, and waits for M. le Vicomte."

"Very well."

"And there is also a man whom your lordship appointed at ten o'clock, — a M. Petit-Jean."

"Very well. Oh, what an evening party!" said Florestan, as he went up-stairs to see his father, whom he found in the salon on the first floor, the same room in which their meeting of the morning had taken place. "A thousand pardons, my father, that I was not awaiting you when you arrived; but I — "

"Is the man here who holds the forged bill?" inquired the comte, interrupting his son.

"Yes, father, he is below."

"Desire him to come up."

Florestan rang, and Boyer appeared.

"Desire M. Petit-Jean to come up."

"Yes, my lord," and Boyer withdrew.

"How good you are, father, to remember your kind promise!"

"I always remember what I promise."

"What gratitude do I owe you! How can I ever prove to you — "

"I will not have my name dishonoured! It shall not be!"

"It shall not be! No, it shall never be, I swear to you, my father!"

The comte looked strangely at his son, and repeated:

"No, it shall never be!" Then he added, with a sarcastic air, "You are a prophet."

"I read my resolution in my heart."

Florestan's father made no rejoinder. He walked up and down the room with his two hands thrust into the pockets of his long coat. He was very pale.

"M. Petit-Jean," said Boyer, introducing a man of a mean, sordid, and crafty look.

"Where is the bill?" inquired the comte.

"Here it is, sir," said Petit-Jean (Jacques Ferrand the notary's man of straw), handing the bill to the comte.

"Is this it?" said the latter, showing the bill to his son.

"Yes, father."

The comte took from his waistcoat pocket twenty-five notes of a thousand francs each, handed them to his son, and said:

"Pay!"

Florestan paid, and took the bill with a deep sigh of the utmost satisfaction. M. Petit-Jean put the notes carefully in an old pocket-book, made his bow, and retired. M. de Saint-Remy left the salon with him, whilst Florestan was very carefully tearing up the bill.

"At least Clotilde's twenty-five thousand francs are still in my pocket, and if nothing is revealed, that is a comfort. But how she treated me! But what can my father have to say to the man Petit-Jean?"

The noise of a door being double-locked made the vicomte start. His father returned to the room. His pallor had even increased.

"I fancied, father, I heard you lock the door of my cabinet?"

"Yes, I did."

"And why, my dear father?" asked Florestan, greatly amazed.

"I will tell you."

And the comte placed himself so that his son could not pass out by the secret staircase which led to the ground floor.

Florestan, greatly disquieted, now observed the sinister look of his father, and followed all his movements with mistrust. Without being able to account for it, he felt a vague alarm.

"What ails you, father?"

"This morning when you saw me, your only thought was, 'My father will not allow his name to be dishonoured; he will pay if I can but contrive to wheedle him by some feigned words of repentance.'"

"Can you indeed think —"

"Do not interrupt me. I have not been your dupe; you have neither shame, regret, nor remorse. You are vicious to the very core, you have never felt one honest aspiration, you have not robbed as long as you have been in possession of wherewithal to gratify your caprices, — that is what is called the probity of rich persons of your stamp. Then came the want of delicate feeling, then meannesses, then crime, then forgery. This is but the first period of your life, — it is bright and pure in comparison with that which would be yet to come."

"If I did not change my conduct, assuredly; but I shall change it, father, I have sworn to you."

"You will not change it."

"But —"

"You will not change it! Expelled from society in which you have hitherto lived, you would become very quickly criminal, like the wretches amongst whom you would be cast, a thief inevitably, and, if your need were, an assassin. That would be your future life."

"I an assassin? — I?"

"Yes, because you are a coward!"

"I have had duels, and have evinced —"

"I tell you, you are a coward! You have already

preferred infamy to death. A day would come in which you would prefer the impunity for fresh crimes to the life of another. This must not be, — I will not allow it. I have come in time, at least, to save my name from public dishonour hereafter. There must be an end to this."

"What do you mean, dearest father? How an end to this? What would you imply?" exclaimed Florestan, still more alarmed at the fearful expression and the increased pallor of his father's countenance.

Suddenly there was a violent blow struck on the cabinet door. Florestan made a motion to go and open it, in order to put an end to a scene which terrified him; but the comte seized him with a hand of iron, and held him fast.

"Who knocks?" inquired the comte.

"In the name of the law, open! Open!" said a voice.

"That forgery, then, was not the last," exclaimed the comte, in a low voice, and looking at his son with a terrible air.

"Yes, my father, I swear it!" exclaimed Florestan, endeavouring, but vainly, to extricate himself from the vigorous grasp of his father.

"In the name of the law, open!" repeated the voice.

"What is it you seek?" demanded the comte.

"I am a commissary of police, and I have come to make a search after a robbery of diamonds, of which M. de Saint-Remy is accused. M. Baudoin, a jeweller, has proofs. If you do not open, sir, I shall be compelled to force open the door."

"Already a thief! I was not then deceived," said the comte, in a low voice. "I came to kill you, — I have delayed too long."

"Kill me?"

"There is already too much dishonour on my name, — it must end. I have here two pistols; you must

blow out your brains, or I will blow them out, and I will say that you killed yourself in despair in order to escape from shame."

And, with a fearful *sang-froid*, the comte drew a pistol from his pocket, and, with the hand that was free, presented it to his son, saying:

"Now an end to this, if, indeed, you are not a coward!"

After repeated and ineffectual attempts to free himself from the comte's hand, his son fell back aghast and livid with fear. He saw by the fearful look, the inexorable demeanour of his father, that he had no pity to expect from him.

"My father!" he exclaimed.

"You must die!"

"I repent!"

"It is too late. Hark! They are forcing in the door!"

"I will expiate my faults!"

"They are entering! Must I then kill you with my own hand?"

"Pardon!"

"The door gives way! You will then have it so!"

And the comte placed the muzzle of the weapon against Florestan's breast.

The noise without announced that the door of the cabinet could not long resist. The vicomte saw he was lost. A sudden and desperate resolution lighted up his countenance. He no longer struggled with his father, and he said to him, with equal firmness and resignation:

"You are right, my father! Give me the pistol! There is infamy enough on my name! The life in store for me is frightful, and is not worth the trouble of a struggle. Give me the pistol! You shall see if I am a coward!" and he put forth his hand to take the pistol. "But, at least, one word, — one single word

of consolation, — pity, — farewell!" said Florestan; and his trembling lips, his paleness, his agitated features, all betokened the terrible emotion of this frightful moment.

"But what if he were, indeed, my son!" thought the comte, with terror, and hesitating to hand him the deadly instrument. "If he were my son I ought to hesitate before such a sacrifice."

A loud cracking of the cabinet door announced that it was being forced.

"My father, they are coming! Oh, now I feel that death is indeed a benefit. Yes, now I thank you! But, at least, your hand, — and forgive me!"

In spite of his sternness, the comte could not repress a shudder, as he said, in a voice of emotion:

"I forgive you."

"My father, the door opens; go to them, that, at least, they may not even suspect you. Besides, if they enter here, they will prevent me from completing, — adieu!"

The steps of several persons were heard in the next room. Florestan placed the muzzle of the pistol to his heart. It went off at the instant when the comte, to avoid the horrid sight, turned away his head, and rushed out of the salon, whose curtains closed upon him.

At the sound of this explosion, at the sight of the comte, pale and haggard, the commissary stopped short at the threshold of the door, making a sign to his agents to pause also.

Informed by Boyer that the vicomte was shut up with his father, the magistrate understood all, and respected his deep grief.

"Dead!" exclaimed the comte, hiding his face in his hands. "Dead!" he repeated in a tone of agony. "It was just, — better death than infamy! But it is horrible!"

"Sir," said the magistrate, sorrowfully, after a few

minutes' silence, "spare yourself a painful spectacle, — leave the house. And now I have another duty to fulfil, even more painful than that which summoned me hither."

"You are quite right, sir," said M. de Saint-Remy; "as to the sufferer by this robbery, you will request him to call on M. Dupont, the banker."

"In the Rue Richelieu? He is very well known," replied the magistrate.

"What is the estimated value of the stolen diamonds?"

"About thirty thousand francs. The person who bought them, and by whom the fraud was detected, gave that amount for them to your son."

"I can still pay it, sir. Let the jeweller go to my banker the day after to-morrow, and I will have it all arranged."

The commissary bowed. The comte left the room.

After the departure of the latter, the magistrate, deeply affected by this unlooked-for scene, went slowly towards the salon, the curtains of which were closed. He moved them on one side with agitation.

"Nobody!" he exclaimed, amazed beyond measure, and looking around him, unable to see the least trace of the tragic event which he believed had just occurred.

Then, seeing a small door in the panel of the apartment, he went towards it. It was fastened in the side of the secret staircase.

"It was a trick, and he has escaped by this door!" he exclaimed, with vexation.

And in fact, the vicomte, having in his father's presence placed the pistol on his heart, had very dexterously fired it under his arm, and rapidly made off.

In spite of the most careful search throughout the house, they could not discover Florestan.

During the conversation with his father and the com-

missary, he had quickly gained the boudoir, then the conservatory, then the lone alley, and so to the Champs Elysées.

The picture of this ignoble degradation in opulence is a sad thing.

We are aware of it. But for want of warnings, the richer classes have also fatally their miseries, vices, crimes. Nothing is more frequent and more afflicting than those insensate, barren prodigalities which we have now described, and which always entail ruin, loss of consideration, baseness, or infamy. It is a deplorable, sad spectacle, just like contemplating a flourishing field of wheat destroyed by a herd of wild beasts. No doubt that inheritance, property, are, and ought to be, inviolable, sacred. Wealth acquired or transmitted ought to be able to shine with impunity and magnificently in the eyes of the poor and suffering masses. We must, too, see those frightful disproportions which exist between the millionaire Saint-Remy, and the artisan Morel. But, inasmuch as these inevitable disproportions are consecrated, protected by the law, so those who possess such wealth ought morally to be accountable to those who have only probity, resignation, courage, and desire to labour.

In the eyes of reason, human right, and even of a well-understood social interest, a great fortune should be a hereditary deposit, confided to prudent, firm, skilful, generous hands, which, entrusted at the same time to fructify and expend this fortune, know how to fertilise, vivify, and ameliorate all that should have the felicity to find themselves within the scope of its splendid and salutary rays.

And sometimes it is so, but the instances are very rare. How many young men, like Saint-Remy, masters at twenty of a large patrimony, spend it foolishly in idleness, in waste, in vice, for want of knowing how to

employ their wealth more advantageously either for themselves or for the public. Others, alarmed at the instability of human affairs, save in the meanest manner. Thus there are those who, knowing that a fixed fortune always diminishes, give themselves up, fools or rogues, to that hazardous, immoral gaming, which the powers that be encourage and patronise.

How can it be otherwise? Who imparts to inexperienced youth that knowledge, that instruction, those rudiments of individual and social economy? No one.

The rich man is thrown into the heart of society with his riches, as the poor man with his poverty. No one takes any more care of the superfluities of the one than of the wants of the other. No one thinks any more of making the one moralise than the other. Ought not power to fulfil this great and noble task?

If, taking to its pity the miseries, the continually increasing troubles, of the still resigned workmen, repressing a rivalry injurious to all, and, addressing itself finally to the imminent question of the organisation of labour, it gave itself the salutary lesson of the association of capital and labour; and if there were an honourable, intelligent, equitable association, which should assure the well-doing of the artisan, without injuring the fortune of the rich, and which, establishing between the two classes the bonds of affection and gratitude, would for ever keep safeguard over the tranquillity of the state, — how powerful, then, would be the consequences of such a practical instruction!

Amongst the rich, who then would hesitate as to the dishonourable, disastrous chances of stock-jobbing, the gross pleasures of avarice, the foolish vanities of a ruinous dissipation; or, a means at once remunerative and beneficial, which would shed ease, morality, happiness, and joy, over scores of families?

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ADIEUX.

The day after that on which the Comte de Saint-Remy had been so shamefully tricked by his son, a touching scene took place at St. Lazare at the hour of recreation amongst the prisoners.

On this day, during the walk of the other prisoners, Fleur-de-Marie was seated on a bench close to the fountain of the courtyard, which was already named "La Goualeuse's Bench." By a kind of taciturn agreement, the prisoners had entirely given up this seat to her, as she had evinced a marked preference for it, — for the young girl's influence had decidedly increased. La Goualeuse had selected this bench, situated close to the basin, because the small quantity of moss which velveted the margin of the reservoir reminded her of the verdure of the fields, as the clear water with which it was filled reminded her of the small river of Bouqueval. To the saddened gaze of a prisoner a tuft of grass is a meadow, a flower is a garden.

Relying on the kind promises of Madame d'Harville, Fleur-de-Marie had for two days expected her release from St. Lazare. Although she had no reason for being anxious about the delay in her discharge, the young girl, from her experience in misfortune, scarcely ventured to hope for a speedy liberation. Since her return amongst creatures whose appearance revived at each moment in her mind the incurable memory of her early disgrace, Fleur-de-Marie's sadness had become

more and more overwhelming. This was not all. A new subject of trouble, distress, and almost alarm to her, had arisen from the impassioned excitement of her gratitude towards Rodolph.

It was strange, but she only fathomed the depth of the abyss into which she had been plunged, in order to measure the distance which separated her from him whose perfection appeared to her more than human, from this man whose goodness was so extreme, and his power so terrible to the wicked. In spite of the respect with which her adoration for him was imbued, sometimes, alas! Fleur-de-Marie feared to detect in this adoration the symptoms of love, but of a love as secret as it was deep, as chaste as it was secret, and as hopeless as it was chaste. The unhappy girl had not thought of reading this withering revelation in her heart until after her interview with Madame d'Harville, who was herself smitten with a love for Rodolph, of which he himself was ignorant.

After the departure and the promises of the marquise, Fleur-de-Marie should have been transported with joy on thinking of her friends at Bouqueval, of Rodolph whom she was again about to see. But she was not. Her heart was painfully distressed, and to her memory occurred incessantly the severe language, the haughty scrutiny, the angry looks, of Madame d'Harville, as the poor prisoner had been excited to enthusiasm when alluding to her benefactor. By singular intuition La Goualeuse had thus detected a portion of Madame d'Harville's secret.

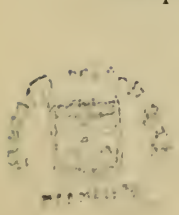
"The excess of my gratitude to M. Rodolph offended this young lady, so handsome and of such high rank," thought Fleur-de-Marie; "now I comprehend the severity of her words, they expressed a jealous disdain. She jealous of me! Then she must love him, and I must love, too — him? Yes, and my love must have betrayed itself in spite of me! Love him, — I — I — a creature

fallen for ever, ungrateful and wretched as I am! Oh, if it were so, death were a hundred times preferable!"

Let us hasten to say that the unhappy girl, thus a martyr to her feelings, greatly exaggerated what she called her love.

To her profound gratitude towards Rodolph was united involuntary admiration of the gracefulness, strength, and manly beauty which distinguished him from other men. Nothing could be less gross, more pure, than this admiration; but it existed in full and active force, because physical beauty is always attractive. And then the voice of blood, so often denied, mute, unknown, or misinterpreted, is sometimes in full force, and these throbs of passionate tenderness which attracted Fleur-de-Marie towards Rodolph, and which so greatly startled her, because in her ignorance she misinterpreted their tendency, these feelings resulted from mysterious sympathies, as palpable, but as inexplicable, as the resemblance of features. In a word, Fleur-de-Marie, on learning that she was Rodolph's daughter, could have accounted to herself for the strong affection she had for him, and thus, completely enlightened on the point, she would have admired without a scruple her father's manly beauty.

Thus do we explain Fleur-de-Marie's dejection. Although she was every instant awaiting, according to Madame d'Harville's promise, her release from St. Lazare, Fleur-de-Marie, melancholy and pensive, was seated on her bench near the basin, looking with a kind of mechanical interest at the sports of some bold little birds who came to play on the margin of the stone-work. She had ceased for an instant to work at a baby's nightgown, which she had just finished hemming. Need we say that this nightgown belonged to the lying-in clothes so generously offered to Mont Saint-Jean by the prisoners, through the kind intervention of Fleur-de-Marie? The poor misshapen protégée of La Goualeuse was sitting



at her feet, working at a small cap, and, from time to time, casting at her benefactress a look at once grateful, timid, and confiding, such a look as a dog throws at his master. The beauty, attraction, and delicious sweetness of Fleur-de-Marie had inspired this fallen creature with sentiments of the most profound respect.

There is always something holy and great in the aspirations of a heart, which, although degraded, yet feels for the first time sensations of gratitude; and, up to this time, no one had ever given Mont Saint-Jean the opportunity of even testifying whether or not she could comprehend the religious ardour of a sentiment so wholly unknown to her. After some moments Fleur-de-Marie shuddered slightly, wiped a tear from her eyes, and resumed her sewing with much activity.

"You will not then leave off your work even during the time for rest, my good angel?" said Mont Saint-Jean to La Goualeuse.

"I have not given you any money towards buying your lying-in clothes, and I must therefore furnish my part with my own work," replied the young girl.

"Your part! Why, but for you, instead of this good white linen, this nice warm wrapper for my child, I should have nothing but the rags they dragged in the mud of the yard. I am very grateful to my companions who have been so very kind to me; that's quite true! But you! — ah, you! — how can I tell you all I feel?" added the poor creature, hesitating, and greatly embarrassed how to express her thought. "There," she said, "there is the sun, is it not? That is the sun?"

"Yes, Mont Saint-Jean; I am attending to you," replied Fleur-de-Marie, stooping her lovely face towards the hideous countenance of her companion.

"Ah, you'll laugh at me," she replied, sorrowfully. "I want to say something, and I do not know how."

"Oh, yes, say it, Mont Saint-Jean!"

"How kind you look always," said the prisoner, look

ing at Fleur-de-Marie in a sort of ecstasy; "your eyes encourage me, — those kind eyes! Well, then, I will try and say what I wish: There is the sun, is it not? It is so warm, it lights up the prison, it is very pleasant to see and feel, isn't it?"

"Certainly."

"But I have an idea, — the sun didn't make itself, and if we are grateful to it, why, there is greater reason still why — "

"Why we should be grateful to him who created it; that is what you mean, Mont Saint-Jean? You are right; and we ought to pray to, adore him, — he is God!"

"Yes, that is my idea!" exclaimed the prisoner, joyously. "That is it! I ought to be grateful to my companions, but I ought to pray to, adore you, Goualeuse, for it is you who made them so good to me, instead of being so unkind as they had been."

"It is God you should thank, Mont Saint-Jean, and not me."

"Yes, yes, yes, it is you, I see you; and it is you who did me such kindness, by yourself and others."

"But if I am as good as you say, Mont Saint-Jean, it is God who has made me so, and it is he, therefore, whom we ought to thank."

"Ah, indeed, it may be so since you say it!" replied the prisoner, whose mind was by no means decided; "and if you desire it, let it be so; as you please."

"Yes, my poor Mont Saint-Jean, pray to him constantly, that is the best way of proving to me that you love me a little."

"If I love you, Goualeuse? Don't you remember, then, what you said to those other prisoners to prevent them from beating me? — 'It is not only her whom you beat, it is her child also!' Well, it is all the same as the way I love you; it is not only for myself that I love you, but also for my child."

"Thanks, thanks, Mont Saint-Jean, you please me exceedingly when you say that." And Fleur-de-Marie, much moved, extended her hand to her companion.

"What a pretty, little, fairy-like hand! How white and small!" said Mont Saint-Jean, receding as though she were afraid to touch it with her coarse and clumsy hands.

Yet, after a moment's hesitation, she respectfully applied her lips to the end of the slender fingers which Fleur-de-Marie extended to her, then, kneeling suddenly, she fixed on her an attentive, concentrated look.

"Come and sit here by me," said La Goualeuse.

"Oh, no, indeed; never, never!"

"Why not?"

"Respect discipline, as my brave Mont Saint-Jean used to say; soldiers together, officers together, each with his equals."

"You are crazy; there is no difference between us two."

"No difference! And you say that when I see you, as I do now, as handsome as a queen. Oh, what do you mean now? Leave me alone, on my knees, that I may look at you as I do now. Who knows, although I am a real monster, my child may perhaps resemble you? They say that sometimes happens from a look."

Then by a scruple of incredible delicacy in a creature of her position, fearing, perhaps, that she had humiliated or wounded Fleur-de-Marie by her strange desire, Mont Saint-Jean added, sorrowfully:

"No, no, I was only joking, Goualeuse; I never could allow myself to look at you with such an idea, — unless with your free consent. If my child is as ugly as I am, what shall I care? I sha'n't love it any the less, poor little, unhappy thing; it never asked to be born, as they say. And if it lives what will become of it?" she added, with a mournful and reflective air. "Alas, yes, what will become of us?"

La Goualeuse shuddered at these words. In fact,

what was to become of the child of this miserable, degraded, abased, poor, despised creature ?

" What a fate ! What a future ! "

" Do not think of that, Mont Saint-Jean," said Fleur-de-Marie ; " let us hope that your child will find benevolent friends in its way."

" That chance never occurs twice, Goualeuse," replied Mont Saint-Jean, bitterly, and shaking her head. " I have met with you, that is a great chance ; and then — no offence — I should much rather my child had had that good luck than myself, and that wish is all I can do for it ! "

" Pray, pray, and God will hear you."

" Well, I will pray, if that is any pleasure to you, Goualeuse, for it may perhaps bring me good luck. Indeed, who could have thought, when La Louve beat me, and I was the butt of all the world, that I should meet with my little guardian angel, who with her pretty soft voice would be even stronger than all the rest, and that La Louve who is so strong and so wicked — "

" Yes, but La Louve became very good to you as soon as she reflected that you were doubly to be pitied."

" Yes, that is very true, thanks to you ; I shall never forget it. But, tell me, Goualeuse, why did she the other day request to have her quarters changed, — La Louve, she, who, in spite of her passionate temper, seemed unable to do without you ? "

" She is rather wilful."

" How odd ! A woman, who came this morning from the quarter of the prison where La Louve now is, says that she is wholly changed."

" How ? "

" Instead of quarrelling and contending with everybody, she is sad, quite sad, and sits by herself, and if they speak to her she turns her back and makes no answer. It is really wonderful to see her quite still, who used always to be making such a riot ; and then

the woman says another thing, which I really cannot believe."

"And what is that?"

"Why, that she had seen La Louve crying; La Louve crying, — that's impossible!"

"Poor Louve! It was on my account she changed her quarters; I vexed her without intending it," said La Goualeuse, with a sigh.

"You vex any one, my good angel?"

At this moment, the inspectress, Madame Armand, entered the yard. After having looked for Fleur-de-Marie, she came towards her with a smiling and satisfied air.

"Good news, my child."

"What do you mean, madame?" said La Goualeuse, rising.

"Your friends have not forgotten you, they have obtained your discharge; the governor has just received the information."

"Can it be possible, madame? Ah, what happiness!"

Fleur-de-Marie's emotion was so violent that she turned pale, placed her hand on her heart, which throbbed violently, and fell back on the seat.

"Don't agitate yourself, my poor girl," said Madame Armand, kindly. "Fortunately these shocks are not dangerous."

"Ah, madame, what gratitude!"

"No doubt it is Madame d'Harville who has obtained your liberty. There is an elderly female charged to conduct you to the persons who are interested in you. Wait for me, I will return for you; I have some directions to give in the work-room."

It would be difficult to paint the expression of extreme desolation which overcast the features of Mont Saint-Jean, when she learned that her good angel, as she called La Goualeuse, was about to quit St. Lazare. This woman's grief was less caused by the fear of becoming

again the ill-used butt of the prison, than by her anguish at seeing herself separated from the only being who had ever testified any interest in her.

Still seated at the foot of the bench, Mont Saint-Jean lifted both her hands to the sides of her matted and coarse hair, which projected in disorder from the sides of her old black cap, as if to tear them out; then this deep affliction gave way to dejection, and she drooped her head and remained mute and motionless, with her face hidden in her hands, and her elbows resting on her knees.

In spite of her joy at leaving the prison, Fleur-de-Marie could not help shuddering when she thought for an instant of the Chouette and the Schoolmaster, recollecting that these two monsters had made her swear never to inform her benefactors of her wretched fate. But these dispiriting thoughts were soon effaced from Fleur-de-Marie's mind before the hope of seeing Bouqueval once more, with Madame Georges and Rodolph, to whom she meant to intercede for La Louve and Martial. It even seemed to her that the warm feeling which she reproached herself for having of her benefactor, being no longer nourished by sadness and solitude, would be calmed down as soon as she resumed her rustic occupations, which she so much delighted in sharing with the good and simple inhabitants of the farm.

Astonished at the silence of her companion, a silence whose source she did not suspect, La Goualeuse touched her gently on the shoulder, saying to her:

"Mont Saint-Jean, as I am now free, can I be in any way useful to you?"

The prisoner trembled as she felt La Goualeuse's hand upon her, let her hands drop on her knees, and turned towards the young girl, her face streaming with tears. So bitter a grief overspread the features of Mont Saint-Jean that their ugliness had disappeared.

"What is the matter?" said La Goualeuse. "You are weeping!"

"You are going away!" murmured the poor prisoner, with a voice broken by sobs. "And I had never thought that you would go away, and that I should never see you more, — never, no, never!"

"I assure you that I shall always think of your good feeling towards me, Mont Saint-Jean."

"Oh, and to think how I loved you, when I was sitting there at your feet on the ground! It seemed as if I was saved, — that I had nothing more to fear! It was not for the blows which the other women may, perhaps, begin again to give me that I said that I have led a hard life; but it seemed to me that you were my good fortune, and would bring good luck to my child, just because you had pity on me. But, then, when one is used to be ill-treated, one is then more sensible than others to kindness." Then, interrupting herself, to burst again into a loud fit of sobs, — "Well, well, it's done, — it's finished, — all over! And so it must be some day or other. I was wrong to think any otherwise. It's done — done — done!"

"Courage! Courage! I will think of you, as you will remember me."

"Oh, as to that, they may tear me to pieces before they shall ever make me forget you! I may grow old, — as old as the streets, — but I shall always have your angel face before me. The first word I will teach my child shall be your name, Goualeuse; for but for you it would have perished with cold."

"Listen to me, Mont Saint-Jean!" said Fleur-de-Marie, deeply affected by the attachment of this unhappy woman. "I cannot promise to do anything for you, although I know some very charitable persons; but, for your child, it is a different thing; it is wholly innocent; and the persons of whom I speak will, perhaps, take charge of it, and bring it up, when you can resolve on parting from it."

"Part from it! Never, oh, never!" exclaimed Mont

Saint-Jean, with excitement. "What would become of me now, when I have so built upon it?"

"But how will you bring it up? Boy or girl, it ought to be made honest; and for that —"

"It must eat honest bread. I know that, Goualeuse, — I believe it. It is my ambition; and I say so to myself every day. So, in leaving here, I will never put my foot under a bridge again. I will turn rag-picker, street-sweeper, — something honest; for I owe that, if not to myself, at least to my child, when I have the honour of having one," she added, with a sort of pride.

"And who will take care of your child whilst you are at work?" inquired the Goualeuse. "Will it not be better, if possible, as I hope it will be, to put it in the country with some worthy people, who will make a good country girl or a stout farmer's boy of it? You can come and see it from time to time; and one day you may, perhaps, find the means to live near it constantly. In the country, one lives on so little!"

"Yes, but to separate myself from it, — to separate myself from it! It would be my only joy, — I, who have nothing else in the world to love, — nothing that loves me!"

"You must think more of it than of yourself, my poor Mont Saint-Jean. In two or three days I will write to Madame Armand, and if the application I mean to make in favour of your child should succeed, you will have no occasion to say to it, as you said so painfully just now, 'Alas! What will become of it?'"

Madame Armand interrupted this conversation, and came to seek Fleur-de-Marie. After having again burst into sobs, and bathed with her despairing tears the young girl's hands, Mont Saint-Jean fell on the seat perfectly overcome, not even thinking of the promise which Fleur-de-Marie had just made with respect to her child.

"Poor creature!" said Madame Armand, as she

quitted the yard, accompanied by Fleur-de-Marie, "her gratitude towards you gives me a better opinion of her."

Learning that La Goualeuse was discharged, the other prisoners, far from envying her this favour, displayed their delight. Some of them surrounded Fleur-de-Marie, and took leave of her with adieux full of cordiality, frankly congratulating her on her speedy release from prison.

"Well, I must say," said one, "this little fair girl has made us pass an agreeable moment, when we agreed to make up the basket of clothes for Mont Saint-Jean. That will be remembered at St. Lazare."

When Fleur-de-Marie had quitted the prison buildings, the inspectress said to her:

"Now, my dear child, go to the clothing-room, and leave your prison clothes. Put on your peasant girl's clothes, whose rustic simplicity suits you so well. Adieu! You will be happy, for you are going to be under the protection of good people, and leave these walls, never again to return to them. But I am really hardly reasonable," said Madame Armand, whose eyes were moistened with tears. "I really cannot conceal from you how much I am attached to you, my poor girl!" Then, seeing the tears in Fleur-de-Marie's eyes, the inspectress added, "But we must not sadden your departure thus."

"Ah, madame, is it not through your recommendation that this young lady to whom I owe my liberty has become interested in me?"

"Yes, and I am happy that I did so; my presentiments had not deceived me."

At this moment a clock struck.

"That is the hour of work; I must return to the rooms. Adieu! Once more adieu, my dear child!"

Madame Armand, as much affected as Fleur-de-Marie, embraced her tenderly, and then said to one of the women employed in the establishment:

"Take mademoiselle to the vestiary."

A quarter of an hour afterwards, Fleur-de-Marie, dressed like a peasant girl, as we have seen her at the farm at Bouqueval, entered the waiting-room, where Madame Séraphin was expecting her. The housekeeper of the notary, Jacques Ferrand, had come to seek the unhappy girl, and conduct her to the Isle du Ravageur.

CHAPTER XIV.

RECOLLECTIONS.

Jacques Ferrand had quickly and readily obtained the liberty of Fleur-de-Marie, which, indeed, only required a simple official order. Instructed by the Chouette of La Goualeuse being at St. Lazare, he had immediately applied to one of his clients, an honourable and influential man, saying that a young female who had once erred, but afterwards sincerely repented, being now confined in St. Lazare, was in danger of forgetting her good resolutions, in consequence of her association with the other prisoners. This young girl having been (added the notary) strongly recommended to him by persons of high respectability, who wanted to take care of her when she quitted the prison, he besought his client, in the name of religion, virtue, and the future return to goodness of the poor girl, to interest himself in obtaining her liberation. And, further to screen himself from all chance of future consequences, the notary most earnestly charged his client not to allow his name to transpire in the business on any account, as he was desirous of avoiding any mention of having been employed in the furtherance of so good and charitable a work.

This request, which was attributed to the unassuming modesty and benevolence of Jacques Ferrand, a man equally esteemed for his piety as for honour and probity, was strictly complied with, the liberation of

Fleur-de-Marie being asked and obtained in the client's name alone; and by way of evincing a still greater regard for the shrinking delicacy of the notary's nature, the order for quitting the prison was sent under cover to Jacques Ferrand, that he might send it on to the parties interesting themselves for the young girl. And when Madame Séraphin presented the order to the directors of the prison, she stated herself to have been sent by the parties feeling a desire to save the young person it referred to.

From the favourable manner in which the matron of the prison had spoken to Madame d'Harville of Fleur-de-Marie, not a doubt existed as to its being to that lady La Goualeuse was indebted for her return to freedom. There was, therefore, no chance of the appearance of Madame Séraphin exciting any mistrust in the mind of her victim. Madame Séraphin could so well assume the look and manner of what is commonly styled "a nice motherly kind of person," that it required a more than ordinary share of penetration to discover a strong proportion of falsehood, deceit, and cunning behind the smooth glance or the hypocritical smile; but, spite of the hardened villainy with which she had shared so long and deeply in the nefarious practices of her employer, Madame Séraphin, old and hackneyed as she was, could not view without emotion the exquisite loveliness of the being her own hand had surrendered, even as a child, to the cruel care of the Chouette, and whom she was now leading to an inevitable death.

"Well, my dear," cried Madame Séraphin, speaking in a tone of honeyed sweetness, as Fleur-de-Marie drew near, "I suppose you are very glad to get away from prison."

"Oh, yes, indeed, ma'am. I presume it is Madame d'Harville who has had the goodness to obtain my liberty for me?"

"You are not mistaken in your guess. But, come, we are already a little behindhand, and we have still some distance to go."

"We are going to Madame Georges at the farm at Bouqueval, are we not, madame?" cried La Goualeuse.

"Oh, yes, certainly, by all means!" answered the *femme de charge*, in order to avert all suspicion from the mind of her victim. "Yes, my dear, we are going into the country, as you say;" and then added, with a sort of good-humoured teasing, "But that is not all; before you see Madame Georges, a little surprise awaits you — Come, come, our coach is waiting below! Ah, how you will be astonished by and by! Come, then, let us go. Your most obedient servant, gentlemen!"

And, with a multitude of bows and salutations from Madame Séraphin to the registrar, his clerk, and all the various members of the establishment then and there assembled, she descended the stairs with La Goualeuse, followed by an officer, to command the opening of the gates through which they had to pass. The last had just closed behind them, and the two females found themselves beneath the vast porch which looks out upon the street of the Faubourg St. Denis, when they nearly ran against a young female, who appeared hurrying towards the prison, as though full of anxiety to visit one of its inmates. It was Rigolette, as pretty and light-footed as ever, her charming face set off by a simple yet becoming cap, tastefully ornamented with cherry-coloured riband; while her dark brown hair was laid in bright glossy bands down each clear and finely rounded cheek. She was wrapped in a plaid shawl, over which fell a snowy muslin collar, secured by a small knot of riband. On her arm she carried a straw basket; while, thanks to her light, careful way of picking her steps, her thick-soled boots were scarcely soiled; and yet the poor girl had walked far that day.

"Rigolette!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, as she recognised her old prison companion, and the sharer in her rural excursions.[1]

"La Goualeuse!" returned the grisette, and with one accord the two girls threw themselves into each other's arms.

Nothing more touchingly beautiful could be imagined than the contrast between these two young creatures, both so lovely, though differing so entirely from one another in appearance: the one exquisitely fair, with large, melancholy blue eyes, and an outline of feature of faultless purity, the pale, pensive, intellectual cast of the whole countenance reminding the observer of one of those sweet designs of a village maid by Greuze, — the same clear delicacy of complexion, the same ineffable mixture of graceful pensiveness and candid innocence; the other a sparkling brunette, with round rosy cheek and bright black eyes, set off by a laughing, dimpled face and mirthful air, — the very impersonation of youthful gaiety and light-heartedness, the rare and touching specimen of happy poverty, of contented labour, and honest industry!

After the first burst of their affectionate greetings had passed away, the two girls regarded each other with close and tender scrutiny. The features of Rigolette were radiant with the joy she experienced at this unexpected meeting; Fleur-de-Marie, on the contrary, felt humbled and confused at the sight of her early friend, which recalled but too vividly to her mind the few days of peaceful calm she had known previous to her first degradation.

"Dear, dear Goualeuse!" exclaimed the grisette, fixing her bright eyes with intense delight on her

[1] The reader will, perhaps, recollect that in the recital made by La Goualeuse to Rodolph, at their first meeting at the ogress's, of the early events of her life, she spoke to him of Rigolette, who, a friendless child like herself, had been (with her) confined in a *maison de detention* until she had reached the age of sixteen.

companion. "To think of meeting you at last, after so long an absence!"

"It is, indeed, a delightful surprise!" replied Fleur-de-Marie. "It is so very long since we have seen each other."

"Ah, but now," said Rigolette, for the first time remarking the rustic habiliments of La Goualeuse, "I can account for seeing nothing of you during the last six months, — you live in the country, I see?"

"Yes," answered Fleur-de-Marie, casting down her eyes, "I have done so for some time past."

"And I suppose that, like me, you have come to see some friend in this prison?"

"Yes," stammered poor Fleur-de-Marie, blushing up to her eyes with shame and confusion; "I was going — I mean I have just been seeing some one, and, of course, am now returning home."

"You live a good way out of Paris, I dare say? Ah, you dear, kind girl! It is just like you to come all this distance to perform a good action. Do you remember the poor lying-in woman to whom you gave, not only your mattress, with the necessary baby-clothes, but even what money you had left, and which we meant to have spent in a country excursion; for you were then crazy for the country, my pretty village maid?"

"And you, who cared nothing about it, how very good-natured and obliging of you to go thither, merely for the sake of pleasing me!"

"Well, but I pleased myself at the same time. Why, you, who were always inclined to be grave and serious, when once you got among the fields, or found yourself in the thick shade of a wood, oh, then, what a wild, overjoyed little madcap you became! Nobody would have fancied it the same person, — flying after the butterflies, — crowding your hands and apron with more flowers than either could hold. It made me quite delighted to see you! It was quite treat

enough for a week to recollect all your happiness and enjoyment. But do let me have another look at you: how sweetly pretty you look in that nice little round cap! Yes, decidedly, you were cut out to be a country girl, — just as much as I was to be a Paris grisette. Well, I hope you are happy, since you have got the sort of line you prefer; and, certainly, after all, I cannot say I was so very much astonished at your never coming near me. 'Oh,' said I, 'that dear Goualeuse is not suited for Paris; she is a true wild flower, as the song says; and the air of great cities is not for them. So,' said I, 'my pretty, dear Goualeuse has found a place in some good honest family who live in the country.' And I was right, was I not, dear?"

"Yes," said Fleur-de-Marie, nearly sinking with confusion, "quite right."

"There is only one thing I have to reproach you for."

"Reproach me?" inquired Fleur-de-Marie, looking tearfully at her companion.

"Yes, you ought to have let me know before you went. You should have said 'good-bye,' if you were only leaving me at night to return in the morning; or, at any rate, you should have sent me word how you were going on."

"I — I — quitted Paris so suddenly," stammered out Fleur-de-Marie, becoming momentarily more and more embarrassed, "that, indeed — I — was not able — ".

"Oh, I'm not at all angry! I don't speak of it to scold you! I am far too happy in meeting you unexpectedly; and, besides, I commend you for getting out of such a dangerous place as Paris, where it is so difficult to earn a quiet livelihood; for, you know, two poor friendless girls like you and me might be led into mischief, without thinking of, or intending, any harm. When there is no person to advise, it leaves one so very defenceless; and then come a parcel of deceitful, flattering men, with their false promises, when, perhaps,

want and misery are staring you in the face. There, for instance, do you recollect that pretty girl called Julie? — and Rosine, who had such a beautiful fair skin, and such coal black eyes?"

"Oh, yes, I recollect them very well!"

"Then, my dear Goualeuse, you will be extremely sorry to hear that they were both led astray, seduced, and deserted, till at last, from one unfortunate step to another, they have become like the miserable creatures confined in this prison!"

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, hanging down her head, and blushing the deep blush of shame.

Rigolette, misinterpreting the real cause of her friend's exclamation, continued:

"I admit that their conduct is wrong, nay wicked; but then, you know, my dear Goualeuse, because you and I have been so fortunate as to preserve ourselves from harm, — you, because you have been living with good and virtuous people in the country, out of the reach of temptation; and I, because I had no time to waste in listening to a set of make-believe lovers; and also because I found greater pleasure in having a few birds, and in trying to get things a little comfortable and snug around me, — I say, it is not for you and me to be too severe with others; and God alone knows whether opportunity, deceit, and destitution may not have had much to do in causing the misery and disgrace of Julie and Rosine! And who can say whether, in their place, we might not have acted as they have done?"

"Alas!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, "I accuse them not; on the contrary, I pity them from my heart!"

"Come, come, my dear child!" interrupted Madame Séraphin, impatiently offering her arm to her victim, "you forget that I said we were already behind our time."

"Pray, madame, grant us a little more time," said Rigolette. "It is so very long since I saw my dear Goualeuse!"

"I should be glad to do so," replied Madame Séraphin, much annoyed at this meeting between the two friends; "but it is now three o'clock, and we have a long way to go. However, I will manage to allow you ten minutes longer gossip. So pray make the best of your time."

"And tell me, I pray, of yourself," said Fleur-de-Marie, affectionately pressing the hands of Rigolette between her own. "Are you still the same merry, light-hearted, and happy creature I always knew you?"

"I was happy and gay enough a few days ago; but now—"

"You sorrowful? I can hardly believe it."

"Ah, but indeed I am! Not that I am at all changed from what you always found me,—a regular Roger Bontemps,—one to whom nothing was a trouble. But then, you see, everybody is not like me; so that, when I see those I love unhappy, why, naturally, that makes me unhappy, too."

"Still the same kind, warm-hearted girl!"

"Why, who could help being grieved as I am? Just imagine my having come hither to visit a poor young creature,—a sort of neighbouring lodger in the house where I live,—as meek and mild as a lamb she was, poor thing! Well, she has been most shamefully and unjustly accused,—that she has; never mind of what just now! Her name is Louise Morel. She is the daughter of an honest and deserving man, a lapidary, who has gone mad in consequence of her being put in prison."

At the name of Louise Morel, one of the victims of the notary's villainy, Madame Séraphin started, and gazed earnestly at Rigolette. The features of the grisette were, however, perfectly unknown to her; nevertheless, from that instant, the *femme de charge* listened with an attentive ear to the conversation of the two girls.

"Poor thing," continued the Goualeuse; "how happy

it must make her to find that you have not forgotten her in her misfortunes!"

"And that is not all; it really seems as though some spell hung over me! But, truly and positively, this is the second poor prisoner I have left my home to-day to visit! I have come a long way, and also from a prison, — but that was a place of confinement for men."

"You, Rigolette, — in a prison for men?"

"Yes, I have, indeed. I have a very dejected customer there, I can assure you. There, — you see my basket; it is divided in two parts, and each of my poor friends has an equal share in its contents. I have got some clean things here for poor Louise, and I have left a similar packet with Germain, — that is the name of my other poor captive. I cannot help feeling ready to cry when I think of our last interview. I know it will do no good, but still, for all that, the tears will come into my eyes."

"But what is it that distresses you so much?"

"Why, because, you see, poor Germain frets so much at being mixed up in his prison with the many bad characters that are there, that it has quite broken his spirits; he seems to have no taste, no relish for anything, has quite lost his appetite, and is wasting away daily. So, when I perceived the change, I said to myself: 'Oh, poor fellow, I see he eats nothing. I must make him something nice and delicate to tempt his appetite a little; he shall have one of those little dainties he used to be so fond of when he and I were next-room neighbours.' When I say dainties, of course I don't mean such as rich people expect by that name. No, no, my dish was merely some beautiful mealy potatoes, mashed with a little milk and sugar. Well, my dear Goualeuse, I prepared this for him, put it in a nice little china basin and took it to him in his prison, telling him I had brought him a little titbit he used once to be fond of, and which I hoped he would like as well as in former

days. I told him I had prepared it entirely myself, hoping to make him relish it. But alas, no! What do you think?"

"Oh, what?"

"Why, instead of increasing his appetite, I only set him crying; for, when I displayed my poor attempts at cookery, he seemed to take no notice of anything but the basin, out of which he had been accustomed to see me take my milk when we supped together; and then he burst into tears, and, by way of making matters still better, I began to cry, too, although I tried all I could to restrain myself. You see how everything went against me. I had gone with the intention of enlivening his spirits, and, instead of that, there I was making him more melancholy than ever."

"Still, the tears he shed were, no doubt, sweet and consoling tears!"

"Oh, never mind what sort of tears they were, that was not the way I meant to have consoled him. But la! All this while I am talking to you of Germain as if you knew him. He is an old acquaintance of mine, one of the best young men in the world, as timid and gentle as any young girl could be, and whom I loved as a friend and a brother."

"Oh, then, of course, his troubles became yours also."

"To be sure. But just let me show you what a good heart he must have. When I was coming away, I asked him as usual what orders he had for me, saying jokingly, by way of making him smile, that I was his little housekeeper, and that I should be very punctual and exact in fulfilling whatever commissions he gave me, in order to remain in his employ. So then he, trying to smile in his turn, asked me to bring him one of Walter Scott's romances, which he had formerly read to me while I worked, — that romance was called 'Ivan—' 'Ivanhoe,' that's it. I was so much amused with this book that

Germain read it twice over to me. Poor Germain! How very, very kind and attentive he was!"

"I suppose he wished to keep it as a reminiscence of bygone days?"

"No doubt of it; for he bade me go to the library from whence we had had it, and to purchase the very same volumes that had so much entertained us, and which we had read together, — not merely to hire them, — yes, positively to buy them out and out; and you may imagine that was something of a sacrifice for him, for he is no richer than you or I."

"He must have a noble and excellent heart to have thought of it," said the Goualeuse, deeply touched.

"I declare you are as much affected by it as I was, my dear, kind Goualeuse! But then, you see, the more I felt ready to cry, the more I tried to laugh; for, to shed tears twice during a visit, intended to be so very cheering and enlivening as mine was, was rather too bad. So, to drive all those thoughts out of my head, I began to remind him of the amusing story of a Jew, — a person we read about in the romance I was telling you of. But the more I rattled away, and the greater nonsense I tried to talk, the faster the large round tears gathered in his eyes, and he kept looking at me with such an expression of misery as quite broke my heart. And so — and so — at last my voice quite failed me, and I could do nothing but mingle my sobs with his. He had not regained his composure when I left him, and I felt quite provoked with myself for my folly. 'If that is the way,' said I, 'that I comfort and cheer up poor Germain, I think I had better stay away!' Really, when I remember all the fine things I intended to have said and done, by way of keeping up his spirits, I feel quite spiteful towards myself for having so completely failed."

At the name of Germain, another victim of the notary's unprincipled persecution, Madame Séraphin redoubled her before close attention.

"And what has this poor young man done to deserve being put in prison?" inquired Fleur-de-Marie.

"What has he done?" exclaimed Rigolette, whose grief became swallowed up in indignation; "why, he has had the misfortune to fall into the hands of a wicked old notary, — the same as persecutes poor Louise."

"Of her whom you have come to see?"

"To be sure; she lived as servant with this notary, and Germain was also with him as cashier. It is too long a story to tell you now, how or of what he unjustly accuses the poor fellow; but one thing is quite certain, and that is, that the wretch of a notary pursues these two unfortunate beings, who have never done him the least harm, with the most determined malice and hatred. However, never mind, — a little patience, 'every one in their turn,' — that's all." Rigolette uttered these last words with a peculiarity of manner and expression that created considerable uneasiness in the mind of Madame Séraphin. Instead, therefore, of preserving the distance she had hitherto observed, she at once joined in the conversation, saying to Fleur-de-Marie, with a kind and maternal air:

"My dear girl, it is really growing too late for us to wait any longer, — we must go; we are waited for, I assure you, with much anxiety. I am sorry to hurry you away, because I can well imagine how much you must be interested in what your friend is relating; for even I, who know nothing of the two young persons she refers to, cannot help feeling my very heart ache for their undeserved sufferings. Is it possible there can be people in the world as wicked as the notary you were mentioning? Pray, my dear mademoiselle, what may be the name of this bad man, — if I may make so bold as to ask?"

Although Rigolette entertained not the slightest suspicion of the sincerity of Madame Séraphin's affected sympathy, yet, recollecting how strictly Rodolph had

enjoined her to observe the utmost secrecy respecting the protection he bestowed on both Germain and Louise, she regretted having been led away by her affectionate zeal for her friends to use such words, — "Patience; every one has his turn!"

"His name, madame, is Ferrand, — M. Jacques Ferrand, Notary," replied Rigolette, skilfully adding, by way of compensation for her indiscreet warmth, "and it is the more wicked and shameful of him to torment Louise and Germain as he does, because the poor things have not a friend upon earth but myself, and, God knows, it is little I can do besides wishing them well out of their troubles!"

"Dear me, — poor things!" observed Madame Séraphin. "Well, I'm sure I hoped it was otherwise when I heard you say, 'Patience; every one has their turn!' I supposed you reckoned for certain upon some powerful protector to defend these people against that dreadful notary."

"Alas, no, madame!" answered Rigolette, hoping to destroy any suspicion Madame Séraphin might still harbour; "such, I am sorry to say, is not the case. For who would be generous and disinterested enough to take the part of two poor creatures like my unfortunate friends against a rich and powerful man like M. Ferrand?"

"Oh, there are many good and noble-minded persons capable of performing so good an action," pursued Fleur-de-Marie, after a moment's consideration, and with ill-restrained excitement; "I myself know one to whom it is equally a duty and a pleasure to succour and assist all who are in need or difficulty, — one who is beloved and valued by all good persons, as he is dreaded and hated by the bad."

Rigolette gazed on the Goualeuse with deep astonishment, and was just on the point of asserting that she, too (alluding to Rodolph), knew some one capable of courageously espousing the cause of the weak against

the strong; but, faithful to the injunctions of her neighbour (as she styled the prince), she contented herself with merely saying, "Really, do you indeed know anybody capable of generously coming forward in defence of poor oppressed individuals, such as we have been talking of?"

"Indeed, I do. And, although I have already to solicit his goodness in favour of others also in severe trouble, yet, I am quite sure that, did he but know of the undeserved misfortunes of Louise and Germain, he would both rescue them from misery and punish their wicked persecutor; for his goodness and justice are inexhaustible."

Madame Séraphin surveyed her victim with surprise. "This girl," said she, mentally, "might be even more dangerous than we thought for. And, even if I had been weak enough to feel inclined to pity her, what I have just heard would have rendered the little 'accident,' which is to rid us of her, quite inevitable."

"Then, dear Goualeuse, since you have so valuable an acquaintance, I beseech of you to recommend poor Louise and Germain to his notice," said Rigolette, wisely considering that her two protégées would be all the better for obtaining two protectors instead of one. "And pray say that they do not in the least deserve their present wretched fate."

"Make yourself perfectly easy," returned Fleur-de-Marie; "I promise to try to interest M. Rodolph in favour of your poor friends."

"Who did you say?" exclaimed Rigolette, "M. Rodolph?"

"Yes," replied La Goualeuse; "do you know him?"

"M. Rodolph?" again repeated Rigolette, perfectly bewildered; "is he a travelling clerk?"

"I really don't know what he is. But why are you so much astonished?"

"Because I know a M. Rodolph!"

"Perhaps it is not the same."

"Well, describe yours. What is he like?"

"In the first place, he is young."

"So is mine."

"With a countenance full of nobleness and goodness."

"Precisely," exclaimed Rigolette, whose amazement increased. "Oh, it must be the very man! Is your M. Rodolph rather dark-complexioned, with a small moustache?"

"Yes, yes."

"Is he tall and thin, with a beautiful figure, and quite a fashionable, gentlemanly sort of air, — wonderfully so, considering he is but a clerk? Now, then, does your M. Rodolph answer to that description?"

"Perfectly," answered Fleur-de-Marie; "and I feel quite sure that we both mean the same. The only thing that puzzles me is your fancying he is a clerk."

"Oh, but I know he is. He told me so himself."

"And you know him intimately?"

"Why, he is my next-door neighbour."

"M. Rodolph is?"

"I mean next-room neighbour; because he occupies an apartment on the fourth floor, next to mine."

"He — M. Rodolph — lodges in the next room to you?"

"Why, yes. But what do you find so astonishing in a thing as simple as that? He only earns about fifteen or eighteen hundred francs a year, and, of course, he could not afford a more expensive lodging, — though, certainly, he does not strike me as being a very careful or economical person; for, bless his dear heart, he actually does not know the price of the clothes he wears."

"No, no, it cannot be the same M. Rodolph I am acquainted with," said Fleur-de-Marie, reflecting seriously; "oh, no, quite impossible!"

"I suppose yours is a pattern of order and exactness?"

"He of whom I spoke, I must tell you, Rigolette," said Fleur-de-Marie, with enthusiasm, "is all-powerful; his name is never pronounced but with love and veneration; there is something awe-inspiring in his very aspect, giving one the desire to kneel in his presence and offer humble respect to his goodness and greatness."

"Ah, then, it is no use trying the comparison any further, my dear Goualeuse; for my M. Rodolph is neither powerful, great, nor imposing. He is very good-natured and merry, and all that; but oh, bless you, as for being a person one would be likely to go on one's knees to, why, he is quite the reverse. He cares no more for ceremony than I do, and even promised me to come and help me clean my apartment and polish the floor. And then, instead of being awe-inspiring, he settled with me to take me out of a Sunday anywhere I liked to go. So that, you see, he can't be a very great person. But, bless you, what am I thinking of? It seems as if my heart were wholly engrossed by my Sunday pleasures, instead of recollecting these poor creatures shut up and deprived of their liberty in a prison. Ah, poor dear Louise — and poor Germain, too! Until they are restored to freedom there is no happiness for me!"

For several minutes Fleur-de-Marie remained plunged in a deep reverie; she all at once recalled to her remembrance that, at her first interview with Rodolph, at the house of the ogress, his language and manners resembled those of the usual frequenters of the *tapis-franc*. Was it not, then, possible that he might be playing the part of the travelling clerk, for the sake of some scheme he had in view? The difficulty consisted in finding any probable cause for such a transformation. The grisette, who quickly perceived the thoughtful meditation in which Fleur-de-Marie was lost, said, kindly:

"Never mind puzzling your poor brains on the subject, my dear Goualeuse; we shall soon find out whether we both know the same M. Rodolph. When you see yours,

speak of me to him; when I see mine, I will mention you; by these means we shall easily discover what conclusion to come to."

"Where do you live, Rigolette?"

"No. 17 Rue du Temple."

"Come!" said Madame Séraphin (who had attentively listened to all this conversation) to herself, "that is not a bad thing to know. This all-powerful and mysterious personage, M. Rodolph, who is, no doubt, passing himself off for a travelling clerk, occupies an apartment adjoining that of this young mantua-maker, who appears to me to know much more than she chooses to own to; and this defender of the oppressed, it seems, is lodging in the same house with Morel and Bradamanti. Well, well, if the grisette and the travelling clerk continue to meddle with what does not concern them, I shall know where to lay my hand upon them."

"As soon as ever I have spoken with M. Rodolph," said the Goualeuse, "I will write to you, and give you my address where to send your answer; but tell me yours over again, I am afraid of forgetting it."

"Oh, dear, how fortunate! I declare I have got one of my cards with me! I remember a person I work for asked me to leave her one, to give a friend who wished to employ me. So I brought it out for that purpose; but I will give it to you, and carry her one another time." And here Rigolette handed to Fleur-de-Marie a small card, on which was written, in beautiful text-hand, "Mademoiselle Rigolette, Dressmaker, 17 Rue du Temple." "There's a beauty!" continued the grisette. "Oh, isn't it nicely done? Better, a good deal, than printing! Ah, poor dear Germain wrote me a number of cards long ago! Oh, he was so kind, so attentive! I don't know how it could have happened that I never found out half his good qualities till he became unfortunate; and now I continually reproach myself with having learned to love him so late."

"You love Germain, then?"

"Oh, yes, that I do! Why, you know, I must have some pretext for visiting him in prison. Am I not an odd sort of girl?" said Rigolette, choking a rising sigh, and smiling, like an April shower, amid the tears which glittered in her large dark eyes.

"You are good and generous-hearted, as you ever were!" said Fleur-de-Marie, tenderly pressing her friend's hands within her own.

Madame Séraphin had evidently learned all she cared to know, and feeling very little interest in any further disclosure of Rigolette's love for young Germain, hastily approaching Fleur-de-Marie, she abruptly said:

"Come, my dear child, do not keep me waiting another minute, I beg; it is very late, and I shall be scolded, as it is, for being so much behind my time; we have trifled away a good quarter of an hour, and must endeavour to make up for it."

"What a nasty cross old body that is!" said Rigolette, in a whisper, to Fleur-de-Marie. "I don't like the looks of her at all!" Then, speaking in a louder voice, she added, "Whenever you come to Paris, my dear Goualeuse, be sure to come and see me. I should be so delighted to have you all to myself for a whole day, to show you my little home and my birds; for I have got some, such sweet pretty ones! Oh, that is my chief indulgence and expense!"

"I will try to come and see you, but certainly I will write you. So good-bye, my dear, dear Rigolette! Adieu! Oh, if you only knew how happy I feel at having met with you again!"

"And, I am sure, so do I; but I trust we shall soon see each other again; and, besides, I am so impatient to know whether your M. Rodolph is the same as mine. Pray write to me very soon upon this subject, will you? Promise you will!"

"Indeed I will! Adieu, dear Rigolette!"

"Farewell, my very dear Goualeuse!"

And again the two poor girls, each striving to conceal their distress at parting, indulged in a long and affectionate embrace. Rigolette then turned away, to enter the prison for the purpose of visiting Louise, according to the kind permission obtained for her by Rodolph, while Fleur-de-Marie, with Madame Séraphin, got into the coach which was waiting for them. The coachman was instructed to proceed to Batignolles, and to stop at the barrier. A cross-road of inconsiderable length conducted from this spot almost directly to the borders of the Seine, not far from the Isle du Ravageur. Wholly unacquainted with the locality of Paris, Fleur-de-Marie was unable to detect that the vehicle did not take the road to the Barrier St. Denis; it was only when the coach stopped at Batignolles, and she was requested by Madame Séraphin to alight, that she said:

"It seems to me, madame, that we are not in the road to Bouqueval; and how shall we be able to walk from hence to the farm?"

"All that I can tell you, my dear child," answered the *femme de charge*, kindly, "is, that I am obeying their orders given me by your benefactors, and that you will pain them greatly if you keep your friends waiting."

"Oh, not for worlds would I be so presuming and ungrateful as to oppose their slightest wish!" exclaimed poor Fleur-de-Marie, with kindling warmth, "and I beseech you, madame, to pardon my seeming hesitation; but, since you plead the commands of my revered protectors, depend upon my following you blindly and silently whithersoever you are pleased to take me. Only tell me, is Madame Georges quite well?"

"Oh, in most excellent health and spirits!"

"And M. Rodolph?"

"Perfectly well, also."

"Then you know him? But, madame, when I was speaking to Rigolette concerning him just now, you did

not seem to be acquainted with him; at least, you did not say so."

"Because, in pursuance with the directions given me, I affected to be ignorant of the person you alluded to."

"And did M. Rodolph, himself, give you those orders?"

"Why, what a dear, curious little thing this is!" said the *femme de charge*, smilingly; "I must mind what I am about, or, with her innocent ways of putting questions, she will find out all my secrets!"

"Indeed, madame, I am ashamed of seeming so inquisitive, but if you could only imagine how my heart beats with joy at the bare thoughts of seeing my beloved friends again, you would pardon me; but, as we have only to walk on to the place whither you are taking me, I shall soon be able to gratify my wishes, without tormenting you by further inquiries."

"To be sure you will, my dear, for I promise you that in a quarter of an hour we shall have reached the end of our journey."

The *femme de charge*, having now left behind the last houses in the village of Batignolles, conducted Fleur-de-Marie across a grassy road, bordered on each side by lofty walnut-trees. The day was warm and fine, the sky half covered by the rich purple clouds of the setting sun, which now cast its declining rays on the heights of the *colombes*, situated on the other side of the Seine. As Fleur-de-Marie approached the banks of the river, a delicate bloom tinged her pale cheeks, and she seemed to breathe with delight the pure fresh air that blew from the country. Indeed, so strongly was the look of happiness imprinted on her countenance, that even Madame Séraphin could not avoid noticing it.

"You seem full of joy, my dear child; I declare it is quite a pleasure to see you."

"Oh, yes, indeed, I am overflowing with gratitude and eagerness at the thoughts of seeing my dear Madame Georges so soon, and perhaps, too, M. Rodolph! I trust

I may, for, besides my own happiness at beholding him, I want to speak to him in favour of several poor unfortunate persons I should be so glad to recommend to his kindness and protection. How, then, can I be sad when I have so many delightful things to look forward to? Oh, who could be unhappy, with such a prospect as mine? And see, too, how gay and beautiful the sky is, all covered with bright, golden clouds! And the dear soft green grass, — I think it seems greener than ever, spite of the season. And look — look out there! See, where the river flows behind those willow-trees! Oh, how wide and sparkling it seems; and, when the sun shines on it, it almost dazzles my eyes to gaze on it! It seems like a sheet of gold. Ah, I saw it shining in the same way in the basin of the prison a little while ago! God does not forget even the poor prisoners, but allows them to have a sight of his wondrous works. Though they are separated by high stone walls from their fellow creatures, the glorious sun shows them his golden face, and sparkles and glitters upon the water there, the same as in the gardens of a king!" added Fleur-de-Marie, with pious gratitude. Then, incited by a reference to her captivity still more to appreciate the charms of liberty, she exclaimed, with a burst of innocent delight: "Oh, pray, madame, do look there, just in the middle of the river, at that pretty little island, bordered with willows and poplars, and that sweet little white house, almost close to the water's edge! How delicious it must be to live there in the summer, when all the leaves are on the trees and the birds sing so sweetly among the branches! Oh, how quiet and cool it must be in that nice place!"

"Well, really, now, my dear," said Madame Séraphin, with a grim smile, "it is singular enough your being so much struck with that little isle!"

"Why, madame?"

"Because it is there we are actually going to."

"Going to that island?"

"Yes; does that astonish you?"

"Rather so, madame."

"But suppose you found your friends there?"

"Oh, what do you mean?"

"Suppose, I say, you found all your friends had assembled there, to welcome you on your release from prison, should you not then be greatly surprised?"

"Oh, if it were but possible! My dear Madame Georges? — M. Rodolph?"

"Upon my word, my dear, I am just like a baby in your hands, and you turn and twist me just as you please; it is useless for me to try to conceal anything, for, with your little winning ways, you find out all secrets."

"Then I shall soon see them again? Dear madame, how can I ever thank you sufficiently for your goodness to a poor girl like me? Feel how my heart beats! It is all with joy and happiness!"

"Well, well, my love, be as wild with delight as you please, but pray do not hurry on so very fast. You forget, you little mad thing, that my old bones cannot run as fast as your nimble young feet."

"I beg your pardon, madame; but I cannot help being quite impatient to arrive where we are going."

"To be sure you cannot; don't fancy I mean to blame you for it; quite the contrary."

"The road slopes a little now, madame, and it is rather rough, too; will you accept of my arm to assist you down?"

"I never refuse a good offer, my dear; for I am somewhat infirm, as well as old, while you are young and active."

"Then pray lean all your weight on me, madame; don't be afraid of tiring me."

"Many thanks, my child! Your help was really very serviceable, for the descent is so extremely rapid just here. Now, then, we are once more on smooth, level ground."

"Oh, madame, can it, indeed, be true that I am about to meet my dear Madame Georges? I can scarcely persuade myself it is reality."

"A little patience, — another quarter of an hour, and then you will see whether it is true or false."

"But what puzzles me," said Fleur-de-Marie, after a moment's reflection, "is, why Madame Georges should have thought proper to meet me here, instead of at the farm."

"Still curious, my dear child, still wanting to know everybody's reasons."

"How very foolish and unreasonable I am, am I not, madame?" said Fleur-de-Marie, smiling.

"And, by way of punishing you, I have a great mind to tell you what the surprise is that your friends have prepared for you."

"For me, madame, a surprise?"

"Be quiet, you little chatterbox! You will make me reveal the secret, in spite of myself."

We shall now leave Madame Séraphin and her victim proceeding along the road which led to the river's side, while we precede them, by a few minutes, to the Isle du Ravageur.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BOATS.

During the night the appearance of the isle inhabited by the Martial family was very gloomy, but by the bright light of day nothing could be more smiling than this accursed spot. Bordered by willows and poplars, almost entirely covered with thick grass, in which wound several paths of yellow sand, the islet included a kitchen-garden and a good number of fruit-trees. In the midst of the orchard was to be seen the hovel, with the thatched roof, into which Martial had expressed his intention to retire with François and Amandine. On this side, the isle terminated at its point by a kind of stockade, formed of large piles, driven in to prevent the soil from wearing away.

In front of the house, and almost touching the landing-place, was a small arbour of green trellis-work, intended to support in summer-time the creeping shoots of the young vines and hops, — a cradle of verdure, beneath which were arranged tables for the visitors. At one end of the house, painted white and covered with tiles, a wood-house, with a loft over it, formed at the angle a small wing, much lower than the main body of the building. Almost precisely over this wing there appeared a window, with the shutters covered with iron plates, and strengthened without by two transverse iron bars attached to the wall by strong clamps.

Three boats were undulating in the water, fastened to

posts at the landing-place. Seated in one of these boats, Nicholas was making sure that the valve he had introduced performed its part properly. Standing on a bench at the mouth of the arbour, Calabash, with her hands placed over her eyes so as to shade away the sun, was looking out in the direction in which Madame Séraphin and Fleur-de-Marie were to come to reach the isle.

"I don't see any one yet, old or young," said Calabash, getting off the bench and speaking to Nicholas. "It will be just as it was yesterday; we may as well wait for the King of Prussia. If these women do not come in half an hour, we can't wait any longer; Bras-Rouge's 'dodge' is much better, and he'll be waiting for us. The diamond-matcher is to be at his place in the Champs Elysées at five o'clock. We ought to be there before her; the Chouette said so this morning."

"You are right," replied Nicholas, leaving the boat. "May thunder smite the old devil's kin, who has given us all the trouble for nothing! The valve works capitally. It appears we shall only have one instead of two jobs."

"Besides, Bras-Rouge and Barbillon will want us; they can do nothing by their two selves."

"True, again; for, whilst the job is doing, Bras-Rouge must keep watch outside the cabaret, and Barbillon is not strong enough to drag the matcher into the cellar, for the old —— will fight for it, I know!"

"Didn't the Chouette say that, for a joke, she had got the Schoolmaster at 'school' in the cellar?"

"Not in this one; in another much deeper, and which is filled with water at spring-tides."

"How the Schoolmaster must rage and foam there in the cellar! There all alone, and blind, too!"

"That is no matter, for, if he saw as clear as ever, he could see nothing there; the cellar is as dark as an oven."

"Still, when he has done singing all the songs he

knows, to pass away the time, his days must hang precious heavy on his hands."

"The Chouette says that he amuses himself with rat-hunting, and that the cellar is full of game."

"I say, Nicholas, talking of certain persons who must be tired, and fume, and fret," remarked Calabash, with a savage smile, and pointing to the window fastened up with the iron plates, "there is one there who must be ready to devour his own flesh and blood."

"Bah! He's asleep. Since the morning he hasn't stirred, and his dog is silent."

"Perhaps he has strangled him for food. For two days, they must both be desperate hungry and thirsty up there together."

"That is their affair. Martial may still last a long time in this way, if it amuses him. When it is done, why, we shall say he died of his complaint, and there'll be an end of that affair."

"Do you think so?"

"Of course I do. As mother went to Asnières this morning, she met Père Férot, the fisherman, and, as he was very much astonished at not having seen his friend Martial for the last two days, mother told him that Martial was confined to his bed, and was so ill that his life was despaired of. Daddy Férot swallowed all, like so much honey; he'll tell everybody else, and when the thing's done and over, why, it'll all seem nat'ral enough."

"Yes, but he won't die directly; this way is a tedious one."

"What else is to be done? There was no way of doing otherwise. That devil of a Martial, when he's put up, is as full of mischief as the old one himself, and as strong as a bull; particularly when he suspects anything, it is dangerous to approach him; but, now his door is well nailed up on the outside, what can he do? His window is strongly fastened with iron, too."

"Why, he might have driven out the bars by cutting away the plaster with his knife, and he would have done it, only I got up the ladder, and chopped at his fingers with the bill-hook every time he tried to go to work."

"What a pleasant watch!" said the ruffian, with a chuckle; "it must have been vastly amusing!"

"Why, it was to give you time to come with the iron plates you went to get from Père Micou."

"What a rage the dear brother must have been in!"

"He ground his teeth like a lunatic. Two or three times he tried to drive me away from the iron bars with his stick, but then, as he had only one hand at liberty, he could not work and release the iron bars, which was what he was trying at."

"Fortunately, there's no fireplace in his room, and the door is solid, and his hands finely cut; if not, he would work his way through the floor."

"What! Through those heavy beams? No, no, there's no chance of his escaping; the shutters are covered with iron plates and strengthened with two bars of iron, the door is nailed up outside with large boat-nails three inches long. His coffin is more solid than if it were made of oak and lead."

"I say, though, when La Louve comes out of prison, and makes her way here, to see her man, as she calls him?"

"Well, we shall say, 'Look for him.'"

"By the way, do you know that, if mother had not shut up those young 'rips' of children, they would have gnawed their ways through the door, like young rats, to free Martial? That little vagabond François is quite furious since he suspects we have packed away his tall brother."

"But, you know, they mustn't be left in the room upstairs whilst we leave the island; the window is not barred, and they have only to drop down outside."

At this moment the attention of Nicholas and Calabash was attracted by the sound of cries and sobs which came from the house. They saw the door of the ground floor, which had been open until then, close violently, and a minute afterwards the pale and sinister countenance of Mère Martial appeared through the bars of the kitchen window. With her long lean arm the culprit's widow made a sign to her children to come to her.

"There's a row, I know; I'll bet that it is François, who's giving himself some airs again," said Nicholas. "That beggar Martial! But for him, this young scamp would be by himself. You keep a good look-out, and, if you see the two women coming, give me a call."

Whilst Calabash again mounted the bench, and looked out for the arrival of Séraphin and the Goualeuse, Nicholas entered the house. Little Amandine was on her knees in the centre of the kitchen, sobbing and asking pardon for her Brother François. Enraged and threatened, the lad, ensconced in one of the angles of the apartment, had Nicholas's hatchet in his hand, and appeared determined this time to offer the most desperate resistance to his mother's wishes. Impassive as usual, showing Nicholas the cellar, the widow made a sign to her son to shut François up there.

"I will never be shut up there!" cried the boy, in a determined tone. "You want to make us die of hunger, like Brother Martial."

The widow looked at Nicholas with an impatient air, as if to reproach him for not instantly executing her commands, as, with another imperious gesture, she pointed to François. Seeing his brother advance towards him, the young boy brandished the axe with a desperate air and cried:

"If you try to shut me up there, whether it is mother, brother, or Calabash, so much the worse. I shall strike, and the hatchet cuts."

Nicholas felt as the widow did the pressing necessity

there was to prevent the two children from going to Martial's succour whilst the house was left to itself, as well as to put them out of the way of seeing the scenes which were about to pass, for their window looked onto the river in which they were about to drown Fleur-de-Marie. But Nicholas was as cowardly as he was ferocious, and, afraid of receiving a blow from the dangerous hatchet with which his young brother was armed, hesitated to approach him. The widow, angry at his hesitation, pushed him towards François; but Nicholas, again retreating, exclaimed:

"But, mother, if he cuts me? You know I want all my arms and fingers at this time, and I feel still the thump that brute Martial gave me."

The widow shrugged her shoulders, and advanced towards François.

"Don't come near me, mother," shrieked the boy in a fury, "or you'll pay dear for all the beatings you have given me and Amandine!"

"Let 'em shut us up; don't strike mother!" cried Amandine, in fear.

At this moment Nicholas saw upon a chair a large blanket which he used to wrap his booty in at times, and, taking hold of and partly unfolding it, he threw it completely over François's head, who, in spite of his efforts, finding himself entangled under its folds, could not make use of his weapon. Nicholas then seized hold of him, and, with his mother's help, carried him into the cellar. Amandine had continued kneeling in the centre of the kitchen, and, as soon as she saw her brother overcome, she sprang up and, in spite of her fright, went to join him in the dark hole. The door was then double-locked on the brother and sister.

"It will still be that infernal Martial's fault, if these children behave in this outrageous manner to us," said Nicholas.

"Nothing has been heard in his room since this

morning," said the widow, with a pensive air, and she shuddered, "nothing!"

"That's a sign, mother, that you were right to say to Père Férot, the fisherman at Asnières, that Martial had been so dangerously ill as to be confined to his bed for the last two days; for now, when all is known, it will not astonish anybody."

After a moment's silence, as and if she wished to escape a painful thought, the widow replied, suddenly:

"Didn't the Chouette come here whilst I was at Asnières?"

"Yes, mother."

"Why didn't she stay and accompany us to Bras-Rouge's? I mistrust her."

"Bah! You mistrust everybody, mother; you are always fancying they are going to play you some trick. To-day it is the Chouette, yesterday it was Bras-Rouge."

"Bras-Rouge is at liberty, — my son is at Toulon, yet they committed the same robbery."

"You are always saying this. Bras-Rouge escaped because he is as cunning as a fox — that's it; the Chouette did not stay, because she had an appointment at two o'clock, near the Observatory, with the tall man in black, at whose desire she has carried off this young country girl, by the help of the Schoolmaster and Tortillard; and Barbillon drove the hackney-coach which the tall man in black had hired for the job. So how, mother, do you suppose the Chouette would inform against us, when she tells us the 'jobs' she has in hand, and we do not tell her ours? for she knows nothing of this drowning job that is to come off directly. Be easy, mother; wolves don't eat each other, and this will be a good day's work; and when I recollect, too, that the jewel-matcher has often about her twenty to thirty thousand francs' worth of diamonds in her bag, and that, in less than two hours, we shall have her in Bras-Rouge's

cellar! Thirty thousand francs' worth of diamonds, mother! Think of that!"

"And, whilst we lay hands on this woman, Bras-Rouge is to remain outside the cabaret?" inquired the widow, with an air of suspicion.

"Well, and where would you have him, I should like to know? If any one comes to his house, mustn't he be outside the door to answer them, and prevent them from entering the place whilst we are doing our 'job?'"

"Nicholas! Nicholas!" cried Calabash, at this moment from outside, "here come the two women!"

"Quick, quick, mother! Your shawl! I will land you on the other side, and that will be so much done," said Nicholas.

The widow had replaced her mourning head-dress with a high black cap, in which she now made her appearance. At the instigation of Nicholas, she wrapped herself in a large plaid shawl, with gray and white checks; and, after having carefully closed and secured the kitchen door, she placed the key behind one of the window-shutters on the ground-floor, and followed her son, who was hastily pursuing his way to the landing-place. Almost involuntarily, as she quitted the island, she cast a long and meditative look at Martial's window; and the train of thought to which its firmly nailed and iron-bound exterior gave rise seemed, to judge by their effect, to be of a very mingled and complicated character, for she knitted her brows, pursed her lips, and then, after a sudden convulsive shudder, she murmured, in a low hesitating voice:

"It is his own fault — it is his own fault!"

"Nicholas, do you see them? Just down there, along the path, — a country girl and an old woman!" exclaimed Calabash, pointing to the other side of the river, where Madame Séraphin and Fleur-de-Marie were descending a narrow, winding path which passed by a high bank, on the top of which were the lime-kilns.

"Let us wait for the signal; don't let us spoil the job by too much haste," said Nicholas.

"What! Are you blind? Don't you recognise the stout woman who came the day before yesterday? Look at her orange shawl; and the little country girl, what a hurry she seems in! She's a good little thing, I know; and it's plain she has no idea of what is going to happen to her, or she wouldn't hasten on at that pace, I'm thinking."

"Yes, I recollect the stout woman now. It's all right, then — all right! Although they are so much behind the time I had almost given up the job as bad. But let us quite understand the thing, Calabash. I shall take the old woman and the young girl in the boat with a valve to it; you will follow me close on, stern to stern; and mind and row steadily, so that, with one spring, I may jump from one boat to the other, as soon as I have opened the pipe and the water begins to sink the boat."

"Don't be afraid about me, it is not the first time I've pulled a boat, is it?"

"I am not afraid of being drowned, you know I can swim; but, if I did not jump well into the other boat, why, the women, in their struggles against drowning, might catch hold of me and — much obliged to you, but I have no fancy for a bath with the two ladies."

"The old woman waves her handkerchief," said Calabash; "there they are on the bank."

"Come, come along, mother, let's push off," said Nicholas, unmooring. "Come you into the boat with the valve, then the two women will not have any fear; and you, Calabash, jump into t'other, and use your arms, my girl, and pull a good one. Ah, by the way, take the boat-hook and put it beside you, it is as sharp as a lance, and it may be useful," added the ruffian, as he placed beside Calabash in the boat a long hook with a sharp iron point.

A few moments, and the two boats, one rowed by

Nicholas and the other by Calabash, reached the shore where, for some moments, Madame Séraphin and Fleur-de-Marie had been waiting. Whilst Nicholas was fastening his boat to a post on the bank, Madame Séraphin approached him, and said, in a low and rapid tone:

"Say that Madame Georges is waiting for us at the island, — you understand?" And then, in a louder voice, she added, "We are rather late, my lad."

"Yes, my good lady, Madame Georges has been asking for you several times."

"You see, my dear young lady, Madame Georges is waiting for us," said Madame Séraphin, turning to Fleur-de-Marie, who, in spite of her confidence, had felt considerable repugnance at the sight of the sinister countenances of Calabash, Nicholas, and the widow; but the mention of Madame Georges reassured her, and she replied:

"I am just as impatient to see Madame Georges; fortunately, it is not a long way across."

"How delighted the dear lady will be!" said Madame Séraphin. Then, addressing Nicholas, "Now, then, my lad, bring your boat a little closer that we may get in." Adding, in an undertone, "The girl must be drowned, mind; if she comes up thrust her back again into the water."

"All right, ma'am; and don't be alarmed yourself, but, when I make you the signal, give me your hand, she'll then pass under all alone, for everything's ready, and you have nothing to fear," replied Nicholas, in a similar tone; and then, with savage brutality, unmoved by Fleur-de-Marie's youth and beauty, he put his hand out to her. The young girl leaned lightly on him and entered the boat.

"Now you, my good lady," said Nicholas to Madame Séraphin, offering her his hand in turn.

Was it presentiment, or mistrust, or only fear that she could not spring quickly enough out of the little bark

in which Nicholas and the Goualeuse were, that made Jacques Ferrand's housekeeper say to Nicholas, shrinking back, "No, I'll go in the boat with mademoiselle?" And she took her seat by Calabash.

"Just as you please," said Nicholas, exchanging an expressive look with his sister as, with a vigorous thrust with his oar, he drove his boat from the bank.

His sister did the same directly Madame Séraphin was seated beside her. Standing, looking fixedly on the bank, indifferent to the scene, the widow, pensive and absorbed, fixed her look obstinately on Martial's window, which was discernible from the landing-place through the poplars. During this time the two boats, in the first of which were Nicholas and Fleur-de-Marie and in the other Calabash and Madame Seraphin, left the bank slowly.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HAPPINESS OF MEETING.

Before the reader is made acquainted with the *dénouement* of the drama then passing in Nicholas's boat, we shall beg leave to retrace our steps.

Shortly after Fleur-de-Marie had quitted St. Lazare in company of Madame Séraphin, La Louve also left that prison. Thanks to the recommendations of Madame Armand and the governor, who were desirous of recompensing her for her kindness towards Mont Saint-Jean, the few remaining days the beloved of Martial had still to remain in confinement were remitted her. A complete change had come over this hitherto depraved, degraded, and intractable being. Forever brooding over the description of the peaceful, wild, and retired life, so beautifully depictured by Fleur-de-Marie, La Louve entertained the utmost horror and disgust of her past life. To bury herself with Martial in the deep shades of some vast forest, such was her waking and dreaming thought, — the one fixed idea of her existence, against which all her former evil inclinations had in vain struggled when, separating herself from La Goualeuse, whose growing influence she feared, this singular creature had retired to another part of St. Lazare.

To complete this sincere though rapid conversion, still more assured by the ineffectual resistance attempted by the perverse and froward habits of her companion, Fleur-de-Marie, following the dictates of her own natural good sense, had thus reasoned:

"La Louve, a violent and determined creature, is passionately fond of Martial. She would, then, hail with delight the means of quitting the disgraceful life she now, for the first time, views with shame and disgust, for the purpose of entirely devoting herself to the rude, unpolished man whose taste she so entirely partakes of, and who seeks to hide himself from the world, as much from inclination as from a desire of escaping from the universal reprobation in which his family is viewed."

Assisted by these small materials, gleaned during her conversation with La Louve, Fleur-de-Marie, in giving a right direction to the unbridled passion and restraining the daring hardihood of the reckless creature, had positively converted a lost, wretched being into an honest woman; for what could the most virtuous of her sex have desired more than to bestow her undivided affections on the man of her choice, to dwell with him in the silence and solitude of woods, where hard labour, privations and poverty, would all be cheerfully borne and shared for his dear sake, to whom her heart was given?

And such was the constant, ardent prayer of La Louve. Relying on the assistance which Fleur-de-Marie had assured her of in the name of an unknown benefactor, La Louve determined to make her praiseworthy proposal to her lover, not, indeed, without the keen and bitter apprehension of being rejected by him, for La Goualeuse, while she brought her to blush for her past life, awakened her to a just sense also of her position as regarded Martial.

Once at liberty, La Louve thought only of seeing "her man," as she called him. He took exclusive possession of her mind; she had heard nothing of him for several days. In the hopes of meeting with him in the Isle du Ravageur, and with the determination of waiting there until he came, should she fail to find him

at first, she paid the driver of a cabriolet liberally to conduct her with all speed to the bridge of Asnières, which she crossed about a quarter of an hour before Madame Séraphin and Fleur-de-Marie (they having walked from the barrier) had reached the banks of the river near the lime-kilns. As Martial did not present himself to ferry La Louve across to the Isle du Ravageur, she applied to an old fisherman, named Father Férot, who lived close by the bridge.

It was about four o'clock in the day when a cabriolet stopped at the entrance of a small street in the village of Asnières. La Louve leaped from it at one bound, threw a five-franc piece to the driver, and proceeded with all haste to the dwelling of old Férot, the ferryman. La Louve, no longer dressed in her prison garb, wore a gown of dark green merino, a red imitation of cashmere shawl with large, flaming pattern, and a net cap trimmed with riband; her thick, curly hair was scarcely smoothed out, her impatient longing to see Martial having rendered an ordinary attention to her toilet quite impossible. Any other female would, after so long a separation, have exerted her very utmost to appear becomingly adorned at her first interview with her lover; but La Louve knew little and cared less for all these coquettish arts, which ill accorded with her excitable nature. Her first, her predominating desire was to see "her man" as quickly as possible, and this impetuous wish was caused, not alone by the fervour of a love which, in minds as wild and unregulated as hers, sometimes leads on to madness, but also from a yearning to pour into the ear of Martial the virtuous resolutions she had formed, and to reveal to him the bright vista of happiness opened to both by her conversation with Fleur-de-Marie.

The flying steps of La Louve soon conducted her to the fisherman's cottage, and there, seated tranquilly before the door, she found Father Férot, an old, white-

headed man, busily employed mending his nets. Even before she came close up to him, La Louve cried out:

"Quick, quick, Father Férot! Your boat! Your boat!"

"What! Is it you, my girl? Well, how are you? I have not seen you this long while."

"I know, I know; but where is your boat? and take me across to the isle as fast as you can row."

"My boat? Well to be sure! Now, how very unlucky! As if it was to be so. Bless you, my girl, it is quite out of my power to ferry you across to-day."

"But why? Why is it?"

"Why, you see, my son has taken my boat to go up to the boat-races held at St. Ouen. Bless your heart, I don't think there's a boat left all along the river's side."

"Distraction!" exclaimed La Louve, stamping her foot and clenching her hand. "Then all is lost; I shall not be able to see him!"

"'Pon my honour and word, it's true, though," said old Férot. "I am extremely sorry I am unable to ferry you over, because, no doubt, by your going on so, he is very much worse."

"Who is much worse? Who?"

"Why, Martial!"

"Martial!" exclaimed La Louve, snatching the sleeve of old Férot's jacket, "My man ill?"

"Bless me! Did you not know it?"

"Martial? Do you mean Martial?"

"To be sure I do; but don't hold me so tight, you'll tear my blouse. Now be quiet, there's a good girl. I declare you frighten me, you stare about so wildly."

"Ill! Martial ill? And how long has he been so?"

"Oh, two or three days."

"'Tis false! He would have written and told me of it, had it been so."

"Ah, but then, don't you see? He's been too bad to handle a pen."

"Too ill to write! And he is on the isle! Are you sure — quite sure he is there?"

"Why, I'll tell you. You must know, this morning, I meets the widow Martial. Now you are aware, my girl, that most, in general, when I notice her coming one way, I make it my business to go the other, for I am not particular fond of her, — I can't say I am. So then — "

"But my man — my man! Tell me of him!"

"Wait a bit, — I'm coming to him. So when I found I couldn't get away from the mother, and, to speak the honest truth, that woman makes me afraid to seem to slight her. She has a sort of an evil look about her, like one as could do you any manner of harm for only wishing for; I can't account for it, I don't know what it is, for I am not timorous by nature, but somehow the widow Martial does downright scare me. Well, says I, thinking just to say a few words and pass on, 'I haven't seen anything of your son Martial these last two or three days,' says I, 'I suppose he's not with you just now?' upon which she fixed her eyes upon me with such a look! 'Tis well they were not pistols, or they would have shot me, as folks say."

"You drive me wild! And then — and what said she?"

Father Férot was silent for a minute or two, and then added:

"Come, now, you are a right sort of a girl; if you will only promise me to be secret, I will tell you all I know."

"Concerning my man?"

"Ay, to be sure, for Martial is a good fellow, though somewhat thoughtless; and it would be a sore pity should any mischance befall him through that old wretch of a mother or his rascally brother!"

"But what is going on? What have his mother or brother done? And where is he, eh? Speak, I tell you! Speak!"

"Well, well, have a little patience! And, I say, do just let my blouse alone! Come, take your hands off, there's a good girl; if you keep interrupting me, and tear my clothes in this way, I shall never be able to finish my story, and you will know nothing at last."

"Oh, how you try my patience!" exclaimed La Louve, stamping her foot with intense passion.

"And you promise never to repeat a word of what I am about to tell you?"

"No, no, I never will!"

"Upon your word of honour?"

"Father Férot, you will drive me mad!"

"Oh, what a hot-headed girl it is! Well, now, then, this is what I have got to say; but, first and foremost, I must tell you that Martial is more than ever at variance with his family; and, if he were to get some foul play at their hands, I should not be at all surprised; and that makes me the more sorry my boat is not at hand to help you across the water, for, if you reckon upon either Nicholas or Calabash taking you over to the isle, why, you'll just find yourself disappointed, that's all."

"I know that as well as you do; but what did my man's mother tell you? He was in the isle, then, when he fell ill, was he not?"

"Don't you put me out so with your questions; let me tell my story my own way. This morning I says to the widow, 'Why,' says I, 'I have seen nothing of Martial these last two or three days. I mark his boat is still moored, — he don't seem to use it as usual; I suppose he's gone away a bit? Maybe he's in Paris upon his business?' Upon which the widow gave me, oh, such a devil's look! So says she, 'He's bad a-bed in the isle, and we don't look for him to get better!' 'Oh, oh!' says I to myself, 'that's it, is it? It's three days since —' Holla! stop, I say!" cried old Férot, interrupting himself; "where the deuce are you going? What is the girl after now?"

Believing the life of Martial in danger from the inhabitants of the isle, and unable longer to endure the twaddle of the old fisherman, La Louve rushed, half frantic with rage and fear, towards the banks of the Seine. Some topographical descriptions will be requisite for the perfect understanding of the ensuing scene.

The Isle du Ravageur was nearer to the left bank of the river than it was to the right, from which Fleur-de-Marie and Madame Séraphin had embarked. La Louve stood on the left bank. Without being extremely high, the surface of the isle completely prevented those on one side the river from seeing what was passing on the opposite bank; thus La Louve had been unable to witness the embarkation of La Goualeuse, while the Martial family had been equally prevented from seeing La Louve, who, at that very instant, was rushing in wild desperation along the banks of the other side of the river.

Let us also recall to the reader, that the country-house belonging to Doctor Griffon, and temporarily occupied by the Count Saint-Remy was midway between the land and that part of the shore where La Louve arrived half wild with apprehension and impatience. Unconsciously she rushed past two individuals, who, struck with her excited manner and haggard looks, turned back to watch her proceedings. These two personages were the Count Saint-Remy and Doctor Griffon.

The first impulse of La Louve, upon learning the danger which threatened her lover, was to hurry towards the spot from whence the peril proceeded; but, as she reached the water's edge, she became painfully sensible of the difficulties that stood in the way of her reaching the opposite land. As the old fisherman had assured her, she well knew the folly of expecting any strangers to pass by, and none of the Martial family would take the trouble of rowing over to fetch her to the isle.

Heated and breathless, her eyes sparkling with eager excitement, she stopped opposite that point of the isle which, taking a sudden bend in this direction, was the nearest approach from the shore. Through the leafless branches of the willows and poplars, La Louve could see the roof of the very house where Martial perhaps lay dying.

At this distracting idea La Louve uttered a wild cry of desperation, then, snatching off her shawl and cap, she slipped out of her gown; and, undressed as she was to her petticoat, she threw herself intrepidly into the river, waded until she got out of her depth, and then, fearlessly striking out, she swam determinedly towards the isle, affording a strange spectacle of wild and desperate energy. At each fresh impulsion of the arms the long, thick hair of La Louve, unfastened by the violent exercise she was using, shook and waved about her head like the rich mane of a war-horse. But for the fixedness of her gaze, constantly riveted on the house which contained Martial, and the contraction of her features, drawn together by almost the convulsive agonies of fear and dreadful anticipation of arriving too late, the poacher's mistress might have been supposed to have been merely enjoying the cool refreshment of the water for her own sport and diversion, so boldly and freely did she swim.

Tattooed in remembrance of her lover, her white but sinewy arms, strong as those of a man, divided the waters with a stroke which sent the sparkling element in rushing streams of liquid pearls over her broad shoulders and strong, expansive chest, resembling a block of half-submerged marble. All at once, from the other side of the isle, rose a cry of distress, — a cry of agony at once fearful and despairing. La Louve started, and suddenly stopped in her rapid course; then supporting herself with one hand, with the other she pushed back her thick, dripping hair, and listened. Again the cry

was repeated, but more feebly, supplicatory, convulsive, and expiring; and then the most profound silence reigned around.

"'Tis Martial — 'tis his cry! He calls me to his aid!" exclaimed La Louve, swimming with renewed vigour, for, in her excited state of mind, the voice which had rent the air, and sent a pang through her whole frame, seemed to her to be that of her lover.

The count and the doctor, whom La Louve had rushed so quickly by, were quite unable to overtake her in time to prevent her daring attempt; but both arrived immediately opposite the isle at the moment when those frightful cries were heard. Both stopped, as perfectly shocked and startled as La Louve had been. Observing the desperate energy with which she battled with the water, they exclaimed:

"The unfortunate creature means to drown herself!"

But their fears were vain. Martial's mistress swam like an otter, and, with a few more vigorous strokes, the intrepid creature had reached the land. She gained her feet, and, to assist her in climbing up the bank, she took hold of one of the stakes used as a sort of protecting stockade at the extremity of the isle, when at that instant, as partially in the water and holding on by one hand, she saw drifting along the form of a young female, dressed after the fashion of the country girls who come to Paris with their wares. The body floated slowly on with the current, which drove it against the piles, while the garments served to render it buoyant. To cling to one of the strongest stakes, and with the hand left free to snatch at the clothes of the female as it was passing, was the instantaneous impulse of La Louve, — an impulse executed as rapidly as conceived. In her extreme eagerness, however, she drew the unfortunate being she sought to save so suddenly and violently towards herself and within the small enclosure formed by the piles, that the body sunk completely under water, though here it

was shallow enough to walk to land. Gifted with skill and strength far from common, La Louve raised La Goualeuse (for she it was, although not as yet recognised by her late friend), took her up in her powerful arms as though she had been a child, and laid her on the grassy banks of the isle.

"Courage! Courage!" shouted M. de Saint-Remy, from the opposite side, having, as well as Doctor Griffon, witnessed this bold deliverance. "We will make all haste to cross the bridge of Asnières, and bring a boat to your assistance."

After thus speaking, both the count and his companion proceeded as quickly as they were able in the direction of the bridge; but La Louve heard not the words addressed to her.

Let us again repeat, that, from the right bank of the Seine, on which Nicholas, Calabash, and their mother assembled after the commission of their atrocious crime, it was impossible, owing to its steepness, to observe what was passing on the opposite shore. Fleur-de-Marie, abruptly drawn by La Louve within the piles, having first sunk completely from the eyes of her murderers, was thus in safety from any further pursuit on their part, they believing that she had effectually perished.

A few instants after, the current, as it swept by, carried with it a second body, floating near to the surface of the water; but La Louve perceived it not. It was the corpse of Madame Séraphin, the notary's *femme de charge*. She, however, was perfectly dead.

It was as much the interest of Nicholas and Calabash as it was of Jacques Ferrand to remove so formidable a witness as well as sharer of their crime; seizing the opportunity, therefore, when the boat sunk with Fleur-de-Marie, to spring into that rowed by his sister, and in which was Madame Séraphin, he contrived to give the small vessel so great a shock as almost threw the *femme de charge* into the water, and, while struggling to recover

herself, he managed to thrust her overboard, and then to finish her with his boat-hook.

Breathless and exhausted, La Louve, kneeling on the grass beside Fleur-de-Marie, tried to recover her strength, and, at the same time, to make out the features of her she had saved from certain death. Who can describe her surprise, her utter astonishment, as she recognised her late prison companion, — she who had exercised so beneficial an influence on her mind, and produced so complete a change in her conduct and ideas? In the first bewilderment of her feelings even Martial was forgotten.

"La Goualeuse!" exclaimed she, as, with head bent down, her hair dishevelled, her garments streaming with wet, she, kneeling, contemplated the unhappy girl stretched almost dying before her on the grass.

Pale, motionless, her half closed eyes vacant and senseless, her beautiful hair glued to her pallid brows, her lips blue and livid, her small, delicate hands stiff and cold, La Goualeuse might well have passed for dead to any but the watchful eye of affection.

"La Goualeuse!" again cried La Louve. "What a singular chance that I should have come hither to relate to my man all the good and harm she has done me with her words and promises, as well as the resolution I have taken, and to find the poor thing thus to give me the meeting! Poor girl! She is cold and dead. But, no, no!" exclaimed La Louve, stooping still more closely over Fleur-de-Marie, and, as she did so, finding a faint — indeed, almost imperceptible — breath escape her lips; "no, she lives! Merciful Father, she breathes! And 'tis I have snatched her from death! I, who never yet saved any one! Oh, how happy the thought makes me! My heart glows with a new delight. How thankful I feel that none but I saved her! Ha! but my man, — I must save him also. Perhaps he is even now in his death-throes — his mother and brother are even wretches

enough to murder him! What shall I do? I cannot leave this poor creature here, — I will carry her to the widow's house. She must and she shall succour the poor Goualeuse and let me see Martial, or I will smash everything in my way. No mother, brother, or sister shall hinder me from going wherever my man is!"

And, springing up as she spoke, La Louve raised Fleur-de-Marie in her strong arms. Charged with this slender burthen, she hurried towards the house, never for a moment doubting that, spite of their hard and wicked natures, the widow and her daughter would bestow on Fleur-de-Marie every requisite care.

When Martial's mistress had reached that point of the isle from which both sides of the Seine were distinguishable, Nicholas, his mother, and Calabash had quitted the place, certain of the accomplishment of their double crime; they then repaired, in all haste, to the house of Bras-Rouge.

At this moment a man who, hidden in one of the recesses of the river concealed by the lime-kiln, had, without being seen himself, witnessed the whole progress of this horrible scene, also disappeared; believing, as well as the guilty perpetrators, that the fell deed had been fully achieved. This man was Jacques Ferrand.

One of Nicholas's boats was rocking to and fro, moored to a stake on the river's bank, just by where Madame Sèraphin and La Goualeuse had embarked.

Scarcely had Jacques Ferrand quitted the lime-kiln to return to Paris than M. de Saint-Remy and Doctor Griffon hastily crossed the bridge of Asnières, for the purpose of reaching the isle; which they contemplated doing by means of Nicholas's boat, which they had discerned from afar.

To the extreme astonishment of La Louve, when she arrived at the house in the Isle du Ravageur, she found the door shut and fastened. Placing the still inanimate form of Fleur-de-Marie beneath the porch, she more

closely examined the dwelling. The window of Martial's chamber was well known to her; what was her surprise to find the shutters belonging to it closed, and sheets of tin nailed over them, strongly secured from without by two bars of iron!

Suspecting a part of the cause of this, La Louve, in a loud, hoarse voice of mingled fury and deep tenderness, screamed out as loudly as she could:

"Martial! My man!"

No answer was returned.

Terrified at this silence, La Louve began pacing round and round the house like a wild beast who scents the spot whither her mate has been entrapped, and with deep roars and savage growls demands admittance to him.

Still pursuing her agitated search, La Louve kept shouting from time to time, "My man! Are you there, my man?" And in her desperate fury she shook and rattled the bars of the kitchen windows, beat against the walls, and knocked long and loudly at the door. All at once a dull, indistinct noise was heard from within-inside the house. Eagerly and attentively La Louve listened; the noise, however, ceased.

"My man heard me! I must and will get in somehow, if I gnaw the door away with my teeth."

And again she reiterated her frantic cries and adjurations to Martial. Several faint blows struck inside the closed shutters of Martial's chamber replied to the yells and screams of La Louve.

"He is there!" cried she, suddenly stopping beneath the window of her lover. "He is there! I am sure of it; and if all other means fail I will strip off that tin with my nails, but I will wrench those shutters open!"

So saying, she glanced frantically around in search of something to aid her efforts to free her lover, when her eye caught sight of a ladder partly hanging against one of the outside shutters of the sitting-room. Hastily pulling the shutter, the more quickly to disengage the ladder,

the key of the outer door, left by the widow on the sill of the window, fell to the ground.

"Oh, if this be only the right key!" cried La Louve, trying it in the lock of the entrance door; "I can go straight up stairs to his chamber. Oh, it turns! It opens!" exclaimed La Louve, with delight; "and my man is saved!"

Once in the kitchen she was struck by the cries of the two children, who, shut up in the cellar, and hearing an unusual noise, called loudly for help. The widow, persuaded that no person would visit the isle or her dwelling, had contented herself with double-locking the door upon François and Amandine, leaving the key in the lock.

Released by La Louve, the two children hurried from the cellar to the kitchen.

"Oh, La Louve!" exclaimed François, "save our dear Brother Martial; they want him to die! For two days he has been shut up in his room!"

"They have not wounded him, have they?"

"No, no, I think not!"

"I have arrived just in time, it seems," cried La Louve, rushing towards the staircase, and hastily mounting the stairs. Then, suddenly stopping, she exclaimed, "Ah, but La Goualeuse! I quite forgot her. Amandine, my child, light a fire directly; and then do you and your brother fetch a poor, half-drowned girl you will find lying outside the door under the porch, and place her before the fire. She would have been quite dead, if I had not saved her. François, quick! Bring me a crowbar, a hatchet, an axe, anything, that I may break in the door that confines my man!"

"There is the cleaver we split wood with, but it is too heavy for you," said the lad, dragging forward an enormous chopper.

"Too heavy! I don't even feel it!" cried La Louve, swinging the ponderous weapon, which, at another time,

she would have had much difficulty in lifting, as though it had been a feather.

Then, proceeding with hurried steps up-stairs, she called out to the children:

"Go and fetch the young girl I told you of, and place her by the fire."

And, with two bounds, La Louve reached the corridor, at the end of which was situated the apartment of Martial.

"Courage! Courage, my man! Your Louve is here!" cried she, and, lifting the cleaver with both hands, she dashed it furiously against the door.

"It is fastened on the outside," moaned Martial, in a feeble voice; "draw out the nails, — you cannot open it otherwise."

Throwing herself upon her knees in the passage, by the help of the edge of the cleaver, her nails, which she almost tore bleeding from their roots, and her fingers, which were lacerated and torn, La Louve contrived to extract the huge nails which fastened the door all around. At length her heroic exertions were crowned with success, — the door yielded to her efforts, and Martial, pale, bleeding, and almost exhausted, fell into the arms of his mistress.

"At last — I have you — I hold you — I press you to my heart!" exclaimed La Louve, as she received and tenderly pressed Martial in her arms, with a joy of possession that partook almost of savage energy. She supported, or, rather, carried him to a bench placed in the corridor. For several minutes Martial remained weak and haggard, endeavouring to recover from the violent surprise which had proved nearly too much for his exhausted strength. La Louve had come to the succour of her lover at the very instant when, worn-out and despairing, he felt himself dying, — less from want of food than air, which it was impossible to obtain in so small an apartment, unprovided with a chimney or any

other outlet, and hermetically closed, thanks to the fiendish contrivance of Calabash, who had stopped even the most trifling crevices in the door and window with pieces of old rag.

Trembling with joy and apprehension, her eyes streaming with tears, La Louve, kneeling beside Martial, watched his slightest movements, and intently gazed on his features. The unfortunate youth seemed gradually to recover as his lungs inhaled a freer and more healthful atmosphere. After a few convulsive shudderings he raised his languid head, heaved a deep sigh, and, opening his eyes, looked eagerly around him.

"Martial! 'Tis I! — your Louve! How are you now?"

"Better!" replied he, in a feeble voice.

"Thank God! Will you have a little water or some vinegar?"

"No, no," replied Martial, speaking more naturally; "air, air! Oh, I want only air!"

At the risk of gashing the backs of her hands, La Louve drove them through the four panes of a window she could not have opened without first removing a large and heavy table.

"Now I breathe! I breathe freely! And my head seems quite relieved!" said Martial, entirely recovering his senses and voice.

Then, as if recalling for the first time the service his mistress had rendered him, he exclaimed, with a burst of ineffable gratitude:

"But for you, my brave Louve, I should soon have been dead!"

"Oh, never mind thinking of that! But tell me, how do you find yourself now?"

"Better — much better!"

"You are hungry, I doubt not?"

"No; I feel myself too weak for that. What I have suffered most cruelly from has been want of air. At

last I felt suffocating, strangling, choking. Oh, it was dreadful!"

"But now?"

"I live again. I come forth from the very tomb itself; and that, too, thanks to you!"

"And these cuts upon your poor bleeding hands! For God's sake, what have they done to you?"

"Nicholas and Calabash, not daring to attack me openly a second time, fastened me up in my chamber to allow me to perish of hunger in it. I tried to prevent their nailing up my shutters, and my sister chopped my fingers with a hatchet."

"The monsters! They wished to make it appear that you had died of sickness. Your mother had spread the report of your being in a hopeless state. Your mother, my man, — your own mother!"

"Hold!" cried Martial, with bitterness; "mention her not." Then for the first time remarking the wet garments and singular state of La Louve's attire, he added, "But what has happened to you? Your hair is dripping wet; you have only your underclothes on; and they are drenched through."

"No matter, no matter what has happened to me, since you are saved. Oh, yes, — saved!"

"But explain to me how you became thus wet through."

"I knew you were in danger, and finding no boat — "

"You swam to my rescue?"

"I did. But your hands? Give them to me that I may heal them with my kisses! You are in pain, I fear? Oh, the monsters! And I not here to help you!"

"Oh, my brave Louve!" exclaimed Martial, enthusiastically; "bravest and best of all brave creatures!"

"Did not your hand trace on my arm 'Death to the cowardly?' See!" cried La Louve, showing her tattooed arm, on which these very words were indelibly engraved.

"Yes, you are bold and intrepid; but the cold has seized you, — you tremble!"

"Indeed, it is not with cold."

"Never mind, — go in there. You will find Calabash's cloak; wrap yourself well in it."

"But —"

"I insist!"

In an instant La Louve, who had quickly flown at her lover's second command, returned wrapped in a plaid mantle.

"To think you ran the risk of drowning yourself, — and all for me!" resumed Martial, gazing on her with enthusiastic delight.

"Oh, no, not altogether for you. A poor girl was nearly perishing in the river, and I saved her as I landed."

"Saved her also. And where is she?"

"Below with the children, who are taking care of her."

"And who is she?"

"Oh, dear, you can scarcely credit what a singular and lucky chance brought me to her rescue! She was one of my companions at St. Lazare, — a most extraordinary sort of girl. Oh, you don't half know —"

"How so?"

"Only conceive my both hating and loving her; for she had introduced happiness and death into my heart and thoughts."

"Who? This girl?"

"Yes; and all on your account."

"On mine?"

"Hark ye, Martial!" Then interrupting her proposed speech, La Louve continued, "No, no; I never, never can —"

"What?"

"I had a request to make to you, and for that purpose I came hither; because when I quitted Paris I knew nothing of your danger."

"Then speak, — pray do!"

"I dare not."

"Dare not, — after all you have done for me?"

"No; for then it would appear as though I claimed a right to be rewarded."

"A right to be rewarded? And have you not already earned that right? Do I not already owe you much? And did you not tend my sick bed with unfailing watchfulness, both night and day during my illness of the past year?"

"Are you not 'my man, — my own dear man?'"

"And for the reason that I am and ever shall be 'your man,' are you not bound to speak openly and candidly to me?"

"For ever, Martial?"

"Yes, for ever; as true as my name is Martial. I shall never care for any other woman in the world but you, my brave Louve. Never mind what you may have been, or what you may have done; that is nobody's affair but mine. I love you, and you love me; and, moreover, I owe you my life. But somehow, do you know, since you have been in prison I have not been like the same person. All sorts of fresh thoughts have come into my mind. I have thought it well over, and I have resolved that you shall no more be what you have been."

"What can you mean?"

"That I will never more quit you; neither will I part from François and Amandine."

"Your young sister and brother?"

"Yes; from this day forward I must be as a second father to these poor children. Don't you see, by imposing on myself fresh duties, I am compelled to alter and amend what is amiss in my way of conducting myself? But I consider it my positive task to take charge of these young things, or they will be made artful thieves. And the only way to save them is to take them from here."

"Where to?"

"That I know not; but certainly far from Paris."

"And me?"

"You? Why, of course, you go with me!"

"With you?" exclaimed La Louve, with joyful surprise, — she could not credit the reality of such happiness. "And shall I never again be parted from you?"

"No, my brave girl — never! You will help me to bring up my little sister and young brother. I know your heart. When I say to you, 'I greatly wish my poor little Amandine to grow up a virtuous and industrious woman. Just talk to her about it, and show her what to do,' I am quite sure and certain that you will be to her all the best mother could be to her own child."

"Oh, thanks, Martial, — thanks, thanks!"

"We shall live like honest workpeople. Never fear but we shall find work; for we will toil like slaves to content our employers; but, at least, these children will not be depraved and degraded beings like their parents. I shall not continually hear myself taunted with my father and brother's disgraceful end, neither shall I go through streets where you are known. But what is the matter, — what ails you?"

"Oh, Martial, I feel as though I should go mad."

"Mad! — for what?"

"For joy."

"And why should you go mad with joy?"

"Because — because, — it is too much —"

"What?"

"I mean that what you propose is too great happiness for one like me to hope for. Oh, indeed, indeed, it is more than I can bear! But who knows? Perhaps saving La Goualeuse has brought me good luck, — that's it, I am sure and certain."

"Still, I ask you, what is the matter, and why are you thus agitated?" exclaimed Martial.

"Oh, Martial, Martial, the very thing you have been proposing —"

"Well?"

"I was going to ask you."

"To quit Paris?"

"Yes," replied she, in a hurried tone; "and to try your consent to accompany you to the forests, where we should have a nice, neat little house, and children whom I should love as La Louve would the children of her man — or, if you would permit me," continued La Louve, in a faltering voice, "instead of calling you 'my man,' to say 'my husband?' For," added she, confusedly and rapidly, "for without that change, we should not obtain the place."

Martial, in his turn, regarded La Louve with deep astonishment, unable to comprehend her meaning.

"What place are you speaking of?" said he, at length.

"Of that of gamekeeper."

"That I should have?"

"Yes."

"And who would give it to me?"

"The protector of the young girl I saved."

"They do not know me."

"But I have told her all about you, and she will recommend us to her protector."

"And what have you told her about me?"

"Oh, Martial, can you not guess? Of what could I speak but of your goodness — and my love for you?"

"My excellent Louve!"

"And then, you know, being in prison together makes folks talk to each other, and open their hearts in the way of confidence. Besides which, there was something so gentle and engaging about this young creature, that I could not help feeling drawn towards her, even in spite of myself; for I very quickly discovered she was a very different person to such as you and I have been used to."

"And who is she?"

"I know not, neither can I guess; but certainly I never met with any one like her. Bless you, she can read the very thoughts of your heart, the same as if she were a fairy. I merely told her of my love for you, and she immediately interested herself in us. She made me feel ashamed of my past life; not by saying harsh and severe things, — you know very well that would not have done much good with me, — but by talking of the pleasures of a life passed in hard but peaceful labour, tranquilly within the quiet shades of deep forests, where you might be occupied according to your tastes and inclinations; only, instead of your being a poacher, she made you a gamekeeper, and in place of my being only your mistress, she pictured me as your true and lawful wife. And then we were to have fine, healthy children who ran joyfully to meet you when you returned at night, followed by your faithful dogs, and carrying your gun on your shoulder. Then we all sat down so gay and happy, to eat our supper beneath the cool shade of the large trees that overhung our cottage door, while the fresh wind blew, and the moon peeped at us from amongst the thick branches, and the little ones prattled and you related to us all you had seen and done during the day, while wandering in the forests; until, at last, cheerful and contented, we retired to rest, to rise the following day, and with light hearts to recommence our labours. I cannot tell you how it was, but I listened and listened to these delightful pictures till I quite believed in their reality. I seemed bound by a spell when she spoke of happiness like this, though I tried ever so much against it. I always found it impossible to disbelieve that it would surely come to pass. Oh, but you have no idea how beautifully she described it all! I fancied I saw it — you — our children — our forest home. I rubbed my eyes, but it was ever before them, although a waking dream."

"Ah, yes!" said Martial, sighing; "that would, in-

deed, be a sweet and pleasant life! Without being bad at heart, poor François has been quite enough in the society of Calabash and Nicholas to make it far better he should dwell in the solitude of woods and forests, rather than be exposed to the further contamination of great towns. Amandine would help you in your household duties, and I should make a capital gamekeeper, from the very fact of my having been a poacher of some notoriety. I should have you for my housekeeper and companion, my good Louve; and then, as you know, we should have our children also. Bless their little hearts, I doubt not our having a fine flock about us! And what more could we wish for or desire? When once we got used to a forest life, it would seem as though we had always lived there; and fifty or a hundred years would glide away like a single day. But you must not talk to me of such happiness; it makes one so full of sadness and regrets that it cannot be realised. No, no, don't let us ever mention it again; because, don't you see, La Louve, it comes over one like — I should soon work myself up to madness if I allowed my thoughts to dwell on it."

"Ah, Martial, I let you go on because I thought I was quite as bad myself. I said just those very words to La Goualeuse."

"Did you, really?"

"I did, indeed. For, after listening to all these tales of enchantment, I said to her, 'What a pity, La Goualeuse, that these castles in the air, as you call them, are not true!' And what do you think, Martial," asked La Louve, her eyes flashing with joy, "what do you think she answered me?"

"I don't know."

"'Why,' said she, 'only let Martial marry you, and give me your promise to live honestly and virtuously henceforward, and directly I quit the prison I will exert myself to get the place I have been speaking of for him.'"

"Get me a gamekeeper's place?"

"Yes; I declare to you, Martial, she said so."

"Oh, but as you say, that can be but a dream — a mere fancy. If, indeed, nothing were requisite for our obtaining the place but our being married, my good girl, that should be done to-morrow, if I had the means; though, from this very day and hour, I consider you as my true and lawful wife."

"Oh, Martial! I your lawful wife?"

"The only woman who shall ever bear that title. And, for the future, I wish you to call me 'husband;' for such I am in word and heart, as firmly and lastingly as though we had been before the *maire*."

"Oh, La Goualeuse was right. A woman feels so proud and happy to say 'My husband!' Oh, Martial, you shall see what a good, faithful, devoted wife I will be to you; how hard I will work! Oh, I shall be so delighted to labour for you!"

"And do you really think there is any chance of our getting this place?"

"If the poor dear Goualeuse deceives herself about it, it is that others deceive her; for she seemed quite sure of being able to fulfil her promises. And besides, when I was quitting the prison a little while ago, the inspectress told me that the protectors of La Goualeuse, who were people of rank and consequence, had removed her from confinement that very day. Now that proved her having powerful friends; so that she can keep her word to us if she likes."

"But," cried Martial, suddenly rising, "I don't know what we have been thinking of all this time!"

"Thinking about — what do you mean, Martial?"

"Why, the poor girl you saved from drowning is down-stairs — perhaps dying; and, instead of rendering her any assistance, we are attending to our own affairs up-stairs."

"Make yourself perfectly easy; François and Aman-

dine are there watching her, and they would have come to call us had there been any danger or necessity. Still you are right; let us go to her. You must see her to whom we shall, perhaps, owe all our future happiness."

And Martial, supported by La Louve, descended to the lower part of the house. Before they have reached the kitchen, let us in a few words describe what had occurred there from the time when Fleur-de-Marie had been confided to the charge of the two children.

CHAPTER XVII.

DOCTOR GRIFFON.

François and Amandine had contrived to convey Fleur-de-Marie near the fire, when M. de Saint-Remy and Doctor Griffon, who had crossed the river in Nicholas's boat, entered the house. Whilst the children were making the fire burn up, Doctor Griffon bestowed on the young girl his utmost care.

"The poor girl cannot be more than seventeen at most!" exclaimed the count, who was looking on. "What do you think of her, doctor?"

"Her pulse is scarcely perceptible; but, strange to say, the skin of the face is not livid in the subject, as is usually the case in asphyxia from submersion," replied the doctor, with professional calmness, and contemplating Fleur-de-Marie with a deeply meditative air.

Doctor Griffon was a tall, thin man, pallid and completely bald, except two tufts of thin black hair, carefully brushed back on the poll, and flattened on the temples. His countenance, wrinkled and furrowed by the fatigues of study, was calm, intelligent, and reflective. Profoundly learned, of great experience, and a skilful practitioner, first surgeon at a civil hospital, where we shall again encounter him, Doctor Griffon had but one defect, that of completely abstracting himself from the patient, and only considering the disease. Young or old, rich or poor, was no matter, — he only thought of medical fact, more or less remarkable, which the subject presented. For him there was nothing but subjects.

"What a lovely face! How beautiful she is in spite of this frightful paleness!" said M. de Saint-Remy. "Did you ever see milder or more expressive features, my dear doctor? And so young — so young!"

"Age is no consequence," said the doctor, abruptly, "no more than the presence of water in the lungs, which was formerly thought fatal. It was a gross error, which the admirable experiments of Goodwin — the famous Goodwin — incontestably detected and exposed."

"But doctor — "

"But it is a fact," replied M. Griffon, absorbed by the love of his art. "To detect the presence of any foreign liquid in the lungs, Goodwin plunged some cats and dogs several times into tubs filled with ink for some seconds, taking them out alive, and then, after a time, dissected the animals. Well, he was convinced from the dissection that the ink had penetrated the lungs, and that the presence of this liquid in the respiratory organs had not caused the death of the subject."

The count knew the doctor was a worthy creature at heart, but that his mad passion for science made him often appear harsh and cruel.

"Have you any hope?" inquired M. de Saint-Remy, impatiently.

"The extremities of the subject are very cold," said the doctor; "there is but very slight hope."

"Ah, poor child! To die at that age is indeed terrible!"

"Pupil fixed — dilated!" observed the doctor, impassive, and pushing up the frigid eyelid of Fleur-de-Marie with his forefinger.

"What a singular man!" exclaimed the comte, almost with indignation. "One would suppose you pitiless, and yet I have seen you watch by my bedside for nights together. Had I been your brother, you could not have been more generously devoted to me."

Doctor Griffon, still occupied in doing all that was requisite and possible for Fleur-de-Marie, replied to the comte without looking at him, and with imperturbable phlegm:

"*Parbleu!* Do you think one meets with an intermittent fever so wonderfully complicated as that you had! It was wonderful, my dear friend — astonishing! Stupor, delirium, muscular action of the tendons, syncopes, — that important fever combined the most varied symptoms. You were, indeed, affected by a partial and momentary attack of paralysis; and, if it had presented nothing else, why, your attack was entitled to all the attention in my power. You presented a magnificent study; and, truth to say, my dear friend, what I desire most in the world is to meet with such another glorious fever. But that is a piece of good fortune that never occurs twice!"

At this moment Martial descended, leaning on the arm of La Louve, who still retained over her wet clothes the plaid cloak which belonged to Calabash. Struck with the paleness of Martial, and remarking his hands covered with dried blood, the comte exclaimed, "Who is this man?"

"My husband!" replied La Louve, looking at Martial with an expression of happiness and noble pride impossible to describe.

"You have a good and intrepid wife, sir," said the comte to him. "I saw her save this unfortunate young girl with singular courage."

"Yes, sir, my wife is good and intrepid," replied Martial, with emphasis, and regarding La Louve with an air at once full of love and tenderness. "Yes, intrepid; for she has also come in time to save my life."

"Your life?" exclaimed the comte.

"Look at his hands — his poor hands!" said La Louve, wiping away the tears which softened the wild brightness of her eyes.

"Horrible!" cried the comte. "See, doctor, how his hands are hacked!"

Doctor Griffon, turning his head slightly, and looking over his shoulder at Martial's hands, said to him, "Open and shut your hand."

Martial did so with considerable pain. The doctor shrugged his shoulders, and continued his attentions to Fleur-de-Marie, saying merely, and as if with regret:

"There's nothing serious in those cuts, — there's no tendon injured. In a week the subject will be able to use his hands again."

"Then, sir, my husband will not be crippled?" said La Louve, with gratitude.

The doctor shook his head affirmatively.

"And La Goualeuse will recover — won't she, sir?" inquired La Louve. "Oh, she must live, for I and my husband owe her so much!" Then turning towards Martial, "Poor dear girl! There she is, as I told you, — she who will, perhaps, be the cause of our happiness; for it was she who gave me the idea of coming and saying to you all I have said. What a chance that I should save her — and here, too!"

"She is a providence," said Martial, struck by the beauty of La Goualeuse. "What an angel's face! Oh, she will recover, will she not, doctor?"

"I cannot say," replied the doctor. "But, in the first place, can she remain here? Will she have all necessary attention?"

"Here?" cried La Louve; "why, they commit murder here!"

"Silence — silence!" said Martial.

The comte and the doctor looked at La Louve with surprise.

"This house in the isle has a bad reputation hereabouts, and I am not astonished at it," observed the doctor, in a low tone, to M. de Saint-Remy.

"You have, then, been the victim of some violence?" observed the comte to Martial. "How did you come by those wounds?"

"They are nothing — nothing, sir. I had a quarrel — a struggle ensued, and I was wounded. But this young peasant girl cannot remain in this house," he added, with a gloomy air. "I cannot remain here myself — nor my wife, nor my brother, nor my sister, whom you see. We are going to leave the isle, never to return to it."

"Oh, how nice!" exclaimed the two children.

"Then what are we to do?" said the doctor, looking at Fleur-de-Marie. "It is impossible to think of conveying the subject to Paris in her present state of prostration. But then my house is quite close at hand, my gardener's wife and her daughter are capital nurses; and since this asphyxia by submersion interests you, my dear Saint-Remy, why, you can watch over the necessary attentions, and I will come and see her every day."

"And you assume the harsh and pitiless man," exclaimed the comte, "when, as your proposal proves, you have one of the noblest hearts in the world!"

"If the subject sinks under it, as is possible, there will be an opportunity for a most interesting dissection, which will allow me to confirm once again Goodwin's assertions."

"How horridly you talk!" cried the comte.

"For those who know how to read, the dead body is a book in which they learn to save the lives of the diseased!" replied Dr. Griffon, stoically.

"At last, then, you do good?" said M. de Saint-Remy, with bitterness; "and that is important. What consequence is the cause provided that benefit results? Poor child! The more I look at her the more she interests me."

"And well does she deserve it, I can tell you, sir,"

observed La Louve, with excitement, and approaching him.

"Do you know her?" inquired the comte.

"Do I know her, sir? Why, it is to her I owe the happiness of my life; and I have not done for her half what she has done for me." And La Louve looked passionately towards her husband, — she no longer called him her man!

"And who is she?" asked M. de Saint-Remy.

"An angel, sir, — all that is good in this world. Yes; and although she is dressed as a country girl, there is no merchant's wife, no great lady, who can discourse as well as she can, with her sweet little voice just like music. She is a noble girl, I say, — full of courage and goodness."

"By what accident did she fall into the water?"

"I do not know, sir."

"Then she is not a peasant girl?" asked the comte.

"A peasant girl, — look at her small white hands, sir!"

"True," observed M. de Saint-Remy; "what a strange mystery! But her name — her family?"

"Come along," said the doctor, breaking into the conversation; "we must convey the subject into the boat."

Half an hour after this, Fleur-de-Marie, who had not yet recovered her senses, was in the doctor's abode, lying in a good bed, and maternally watched by M. Griffon's gardener's wife, to whom was added La Louve The doctor promised M. de Saint-Remy, who was more and more interested in La Goualeuse, to return to see her again in the evening. Martial went to Paris with François and Amandine, La Louve being unwilling to quit Fleur-de-Marie before she had been pronounced out of danger.

The Isle du Ravageur remained deserted. We shall presently find its sinister inhabitants at Bras-Rouge's,

where they were to be joined by the Chouette for the murder of the diamond-matcher. In the meantime we will conduct the reader to the rendezvous which Tom, Sarah's brother, had with the horrible hag, the Schoolmaster's accomplice.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PORTRAIT.

Thomas Seyton, the brother of the Countess Sarah Macgregor, was walking impatiently on the boulevards near the Observatory, when he saw the Chouette arrive. The horrible beldame had on a white cap and her usual plaid shawl. The point of a stiletto, as round as a thick swan's quill, and very sharp, having perforated a hole at the bottom of her large straw basket which she carried on her arm, the extremity of this murderous weapon, which had belonged to the Schoolmaster, might be seen projecting. Thomas Seyton did not perceive that the Chouette was armed.

"It has just struck three by the Luxembourg," said the old woman. "Here I am, like the hand of the clock."

"Come," replied Thomas Seyton. And, preceding her, he crossed some open fields; and turning down a deserted alley near the Rue Cassini, he stopped half way down the lane, which was barred by a turnstile, opened a small door, motioned to the Chouette to follow him; and, after having advanced with her a few steps down a path overgrown by thick trees, he said, "Wait here," and disappeared.

"That is, if you don't keep me on the 'waiting lay' too long," responded the Chouette; "for I must be at Bras Rouge's at five o'clock to meet the Martials, and help silence the diamond-matcher. It's very well I have my 'gulley' (poniard). Oh, the vagabond, he has got his nose out of window!" added the hag, as she saw

the point of the stiletto coming through the seam in the basket. And taking the weapon, which had a wooden handle, from the basket, she replaced it so that it was completely concealed. "This is *fourline's* tool," she continued, "and he has asked me for it so many times to kill the rats who came skipping about him in his cellar. Poor things! They have no one but the old blind man to divert them and keep them company. They ought not to be hurt if they play about a bit; and so I will not let him hurt the dears, and I keep his tool to myself. Besides, I shall soon want it for this woman, perhaps. Thirty thousand francs' worth of diamonds,— what a 'haul' for each of us! It'll be a good day's work, and not like that of the other day with that old notary whom I thought to squeeze. It was no use to threaten him if he would not 'stand some blunt' that I would lay information that it was his housekeeper who had sent La Goualeuse to me by Tournemine when she was a little brat. Nothing frightened the old brute, he called me an old hag, and shoved me out-of-doors. Well, well, I'll send an anonymous letter to these people at the farm where Pegriotte was, to inform them that it was the notary who formerly abandoned her to me. Perhaps they know her family; and when she gets out of St. Lazare, why, the matter will get too hot for that old brute, Jacques Ferrand. Some one comes,— ah, it is the pale lady who was dressed in men's clothes at the *tapis-franc* of the ogress, and with the tall fellow who just left me, the same that the *fourline* and I robbed by the excavations near Notre-Dame," added the Chouette, as she saw Sarah appear at the extremity of the walk. "Here's another job for me, I see; and this little lady must have something to do with our having carried off La Goualeuse from the farm. If she pays well for another job of work, why, that will be 'the ticket.'"

As Sarah approached the Chouette, whom she saw

again for the first time since their rencontre at the *tapis-franc*, her countenance expressed the disdain, the disgust, which persons of a certain rank feel when they come in contact with low wretches whom they take as tools or accomplices.

Thomas Seyton, who, until now, had actively served the crimiual machinations of his sister, although he considered them as all but futile, had refused any longer to continue this contemptible part, consenting, nevertheless, for the first and last time to put his sister in communication with the Chouette, without himself interfering in the fresh projects they might plan. The countess, unable to win back Rodolph to her by breaking the bonds or the affections which she believed so dear to him, hoped, as we have seen, to render him the dupe of a base deceit, the success of which might realise the vision of this obstinate, ambitious, and cruel woman. Her design was to persuade Rodolph that their daughter was not dead, and to substitute an orphan for the child.

We know that Jacques Ferrand — having formally refused to participate in this plot in spite of Sarah's menaces — had resolved to make away with Fleur-de-Marie, as much from the fear of the Chouette's disclosure, as from fear of the obstinate persistence of the countess. But the latter had by no means abandoned her design, feeling persuaded that she should corrupt or intimidate the notary when she should be assured of having obtained a young girl capable of filling the character which she desired her to assume.

After a moment's silence Sarah said to the Chouette, "You are adroit, discreet, and resolute?"

"Adroit as a monkey, resolute as a bulldog, and mute as a fish; such is the Chouette, and such the devil made her; at your service if you want her, — and you do," replied the old wretch, quickly. "I hope we have managed well with the young country wench who is now in St. Lazare for two good months."

"We are not talking of her, but of something else."

"Anything you please, my handsome lady, provided there's money at the end of what you mean to propose, and then we shall be as right as my fingers."

Sarah could not control a movement of disgust. "You must know," she resumed, "many people in the lower ranks of life, — persons who are in misfortune?"

"There are more of them than there are of millionaires; you may pick and choose. We have plentiful wretchedness in Paris."

"I want to meet with a poor orphan girl, and particularly if she lost her parents young. She must be good-looking, of gentle disposition, and not more than seventeen years of age."

The Chouette gazed at Sarah with amazement.

"Such an orphan girl must be by no means difficult to meet with," continued the countess; "there are so many foundling children!"

"Why, my good lady, you forget La Goualeuse. She is the very thing."

"Who is La Goualeuse?"

"The young thing we carried off from Bouqueval."

"We are not talking of her now, I tell you."

"But hear me, and be sure you pay me well for my advice. You want an orphan girl, as quiet as a lamb, as handsome as daylight, and who is only seventeen, you say?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, take La Goualeuse when she leaves St. Lazare; she is the very thing for you, as if we had made her on purpose. For she was about six years of age when that scamp, Jacques Ferrand (and it's now ten years ago), gave her to me with a thousand francs, in order to get rid of her, — that is to say, it was Tournemine, who is now at the galleys at Rochefort, who brought her to me, saying there was no doubt she was

some child they wanted to get rid of or pass off for dead."

"Jacques Ferrand, do you say?" exclaimed Sarah, in a voice so choked that the Chouette receded several paces. "The notary, Jacques Ferrand, gave you this child — and — ?" She could not finish, her emotion was too violent; and with her two clasped hands extended towards the Chouette, she trembled convulsively, surprise and joy agitating her features.

"I don't know what it is that makes you so much in earnest, my good lady," replied the old hag; "but it is a very simple story. Ten years ago Tournemine, an old pal of mine, said to me: 'Have you a mind to take charge of a little girl that they want to get out of the way? No matter whether she slips her wind or not. There's a thousand francs for the job, and do what you like with the 'kinchin.'"

"Ten years ago?" cried Sarah.

"Ten years."

"A little fair girl?"

"A little fair girl."

"With blue eyes?"

"Blue eyes — as blue as blue bells."

"And it was she who was at the farm?"

"And we packed her up and carted her off to St. Lazare. I must say, though, that I didn't expect to find her — Pegriotte — in the country as I did, though."

"Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" exclaimed Sarah, falling on her knees, and elevating her hands and eyes to heaven, "Thy ways are inscrutable, and I bow down before thy providence! Oh, if such happiness be possible! But, no, I cannot yet believe it; it would be too fortunate! No!" Then rising suddenly she said to the Chouette, who was gazing at her with the utmost astonishment, "Follow me!" And Sarah walked before her with hasty steps.

At the end of the alley she ascended several steps

that led by a glass door to a small room sumptuously furnished. At the moment when the Chouette was about to enter, Sarah made a sign to her to remain outside, and then rang the bell violently. A servant appeared.

"I am not at home to anybody, and let no one enter here, — no one, do you hear?"

The servant bowed and retired. Sarah, for the sake of greater security, pushed to the bolt. The Chouette heard the order given to the servant, and saw Sarah fasten the bolt. The countess then turning towards her, said: "Come in quickly, and shut the door."

The Chouette did as she was bidden.

Hastily opening a *secrétaire*, Sarah took from it an ebony coffer, which she placed on a writing-table in the centre of the room, and beckoned the Chouette towards her. The coffer was filled with small caskets lying one upon the other, and containing splendid jewelry. Sarah was in so much haste to arrive at the bottom of the coffer, that she hastily scattered over the table these jewel-cases, splendidly filled with necklaces, bracelets, tiaras of rubies, emeralds, and diamonds, which sparkled with a thousand fires.

The Chouette was dazzled. She was armed, was alone with the countess; escape was easy — certain. An infernal idea shot through the brain of this monster. But to put this new crime into execution it was necessary to extricate her stiletto from her basket, and approach Sarah without exciting her suspicions.

With the craft of the tiger-cat, who grovels along treacherously towards its prey, the beldame profited by the countess's preoccupation to move imperceptibly around the table which separated her from her victim. The Chouette had already begun her perfidious movement, when she was compelled suddenly to stop short. Sarah took a locket from the bottom of the box, leaned over

the table, and, handing it to the Chouette with a trembling hand, said :

"Look at this portrait."

"It is Pegriotte!" exclaimed the Chouette, struck with the strong resemblance; "it is the little girl who was handed to me! I think I see her just as she was when Tournemine brought her to me. That's just like her long curling hair, which I cut off and sold directly, *ma foi!*"

"You recognise her; it is really she? Oh, I conjure you, do not deceive me — do not deceive me!"

"I tell you, my good lady, it is Pegriotte, as if I saw herself there," said the Chouette, trying to draw nearer to Sarah without being remarked. "And even now she is very like this portrait; if you saw her you would be struck by the likeness."

Sarah had not uttered one cry of pain or alarm when she learned that her daughter had been for ten years leading a wretched existence, forsaken as she was. Not one feeling of remorse was there when she reflected that she herself had snatched her away disastrously from the peaceful retreat in which Rodolph had placed her. This unnatural mother did not eagerly question the Chouette with terrible anxiety as to the past life of the child. No! In her heart ambition had long since stifled every sentiment of maternal tenderness. It was not joy at again being restored to a lost daughter that transported her, — it was the hope of seeing at length realised the vain dream of her whole existence. Rodolph had felt deeply interested in this unfortunate girl, had protected her without knowing her; what would then be his feelings when he discovered that she was — his daughter? He was free — the countess was a widow! Sarah already saw the sovereign crown sparkling on her brow.

The Chouette, still stealing on with slow steps, had at length reached one end of the table, and had her stiletto

perpendicularly in her basket, its handle on a level with the opening, and within her clutch. She was but a step or two from the countess.

"Do you know how to write?" inquired Sarah of her; and, pushing from her the casket and gems, she opened a blotting-book, which was by an inkstand.

"No, madame; I do not!" replied the Chouette, at all risks.

"I will write, then, at your dictation. Tell me all the circumstances of the abandonment of this little girl."

And Sarah, sitting in an armchair before the writing-table, took up a pen, and made a sign to the Chouette to come close to her. The old wretch's one eye sparkled. At last she was standing up, close to the seat on which Sarah was sitting, and, stooping over a table, was preparing to write.

"I will read aloud, and then," said the countess, "you can correct any mistakes."

"Yes, madame," replied the Chouette, narrowly watching every motion of Sarah; and she furtively introduced her hand into her basket, that she might be able to grasp the poniard without being observed.

The countess commenced writing.

"I declare that—"

Then interrupting herself, and turning towards the Chouette, who was at the moment touching the handle of her poniard, Sarah added:

"At what period was the child brought to you?"

"In the month of February, 1827."

"And by whom?" continued Sarah, turning towards the Chouette.

"By Pierre Tournemine, now at the galleys at Rochefort. It was Madame Séraphin, the notary's housekeeper, who brought the young girl to him."

The countess continued writing, and then read aloud:

"I declare that, in the month of February, 1827, a person named — "

The Chouette had drawn the poniard; already had she raised her arm to strike her victim between the shoulders; Sarah turned again. The Chouette, that she might not be off her guard, leaned her right hand, armed as it was, on the back of Sarah's arm-chair, and then stooped towards her, as if in attitude to reply to her question.

"Tell me again the name of the man who handed the child to you?" said the countess.

"Pierre Tournemine," repeated Sarah, as she wrote it down, "at this time at the galleys of Rochefort, brought me a child, which had been confided to him by the housekeeper of — "

The countess could not finish. The Chouette having got rid of her basket by allowing it to slide from her arm onto the floor, threw herself on the countess with equal fury and rapidity; and having grasped the back of her neck with her left hand, forced her face down on the table, and then with her right hand drove the stiletto in between her two shoulders.

This atrocious assassination was so promptly effected that the countess did not utter a cry — a moan. Still sitting, she remained with her head and the front of her body on the table. Her pen fell from her fingers.

"Just the very blow which *fourline* gave the little old man in the Rue du Roule!" said the monster. "One more who will never wag tongue again! Her account is settled!" And the Chouette, gathering up the jewels together, huddled them into her basket, not perceiving that her victim still breathed.

The murder and robbery effected, the horrid old devil opened the glass door, ran swiftly along the tree-covered path, went out by the small side door, and reached the lone tract of ground. Near the Observa-

tory she took a hackney-coach, which drove her to Bras-Rouge's in the Champs Elysées.

The widow Martial, Nicholas, Calabash, and Barbillon had, as we know, an appointment with the Chouette in this den of infamy, in order to rob and murder the diamond-matcher.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE AGENT OF SAFETY.

The reader already knows the Bleeding Heart in the Champs Elysées, near the Court de la Reine, in one of the deep ditches which, a few years since, were close to this promenade. The inhabitants of the Isle du Ravageur had not yet arrived.

After the departure of Bradamanti, who had, as we know, accompanied Madame d'Harville's stepmother into Normandy, Tortillard had returned to his father. Placed as a sentinel at the top of the staircase, the little cripple was to announce the arrival of the Martials by a certain cry, Bras-Rouge being at this moment in secret conference with an *agent-de-sûreté* named Narcisse Borel, whom the reader may perchance remember to have seen at the *tapis-franc* of the ogress, when he came there to arrest two miscreants accused of murder.

This agent, a man about forty years of age, was thick-set and powerful, with a high colour, a keen, quick eye, his face entirely shaven, in order that he might better assume the various disguises necessary for his dangerous expeditions; for it was frequently necessary for him to unite the transformations of the actor to the courage and energy of the soldier, in order to seize on certain ruffians with whom he had to contend in cunning and determination. Narcisse Borel was, in a word, one of the most useful and most active instruments of that providence

on a small scale which is modestly and commonly termed the police.

We will return to the conversation between Narcisse Borel and Bras-Rouge, which appeared to be very animated.

"Yes," said the agent of safety; "you are accused of profiting by your double-faced position, and of taking with impunity a share in the booty of a band of most dangerous malefactors, and then giving false information respecting them to the protective police. Take care, Bras-Rouge; for if you are detected no mercy will be shown you!"

"Alas! I know I am accused of this; and it is very distressing for me, my good M. Narcisse," replied Bras-Rouge, whilst his weasel's face assumed a hypocritical air of vexation. "But I hope that this day will at last do me justice, and my good faith will be recognised."

"That remains to be proved."

"How can I be distrusted — have I not given proofs? Was it I or was it not who, at the time, enabled you to apprehend Ambroise Martial, one of the most dangerous malefactors in Paris, in the very fact?"

"All this is very fine and good; but Ambroise was warned they were going to arrest him, and if I had not been earlier than the hour you told me of, he would have escaped."

"Do you think me capable, M. Narcisse, of having secretly told him of your coming?"

"I only know that I received from the scoundrel a pistol-shot aimed full at me, but which, fortunately, only grazed my arm."

"Why, to be sure, M. Narcisse, in your profession you must be occasionally exposed to such mistakes!"

"Ah, you call these mistakes, eh?"

"Certainly; for, no doubt, the wicked fellow intended to lodge the ball in your body."

"In the arm, body, or head, no matter, I don't complain of that; every profession has its disagreeables."

"And its pleasures, too, M. Narcisse, and its pleasures. For instance, when a man as cunning, as skilful, and as courageous as you, has been for a long time on the track of a gang of villains, whom he follows from quarter to quarter, from lurking-place to lurking-place, with a good bloodhound like your poor servant to command, Bras-Rouge, and, finally, marks them down and comes upon them in a trap from which not one of them can escape, why, then, you must say, M. Narcisse, that there is great pleasure in it, — the joy of a sportsman, — not including the service he renders to justice!" added the host of the Bleeding Heart, with a grave air.

"I should fully agree with you if the bloodhound were faithful, but I fear it is not."

"Ah, M. Narcisse, you think —"

"I think that, instead of putting us on the track, you amuse yourself with setting us on a false scent, and abuse the confidence placed in you. Every day you promise to aid us to lay hands on the gang, and that day never arrives."

"What if the day arrives to-day, M. Narcisse, as I am sure it will? What if I bring together in a parcel Barbillon, Nicholas Martial, the widow, her daughter, and the Chouette? Will that or will it not be a good sweep of the net? Will you then mistrust me any longer?"

"No; and you will have rendered a real service; for there are very strong presumptive facts against this gang, — suspicions almost assured, but, unfortunately, no proofs."

"So, then, a small fag-end of actual crime, which would allow of their being apprehended, would help amazingly to unravel the difficult skein, — eh, M. Narcisse?"

"Most decidedly. And you assure me that there has

not been the slightest incitement on your part towards the *coup* which they are now going to attempt?"

"No, on my honour! It is the Chouette, who came to me to propose inveigling the diamond-matcher here when that infernal hag learned from my son that Morel, the lapidary, who lives in the Rue du Temple, was a workman in real stones, and not in false, and that Mother Mathieu had frequently considerable value about her person, I acceded to the proposition, and suggested to the Chouette that the Martials and Barbillon should join her, so that I might be able to put the whole party into your hands."

"And the Schoolmaster, — that fellow who is so dangerous, so powerful, and so ferocious, and who was always with the Chouette, — one of the frequenters of the *tapis-franc?*"

"The Schoolmaster?" said Bras-Rouge, feigning astonishment.

"Yes, a convict escaped from the galleys at Rochefort, Anselm Duresnel by name, sentenced for life. We know now that he disfigured himself on purpose, that he might not be recognised. Have you no trace of him?"

"None," replied Bras-Rouge, boldly, for he had his reasons for the lie, the Schoolmaster being at this very moment shut up in one of the cellars of the cabaret.

"There is every reason to believe that the Schoolmaster is the author of fresh murders. He would be an important capture."

"No one knows what has become of him for the last six weeks."

"And that's the reason you are reproached with having lost all trace of him."

"Always reproaches, M. Narcisse, always!"

"Not for want of ample cause! And how goes on the smuggling?"

"Is it not necessary that I should know something of

all kinds of persons — smugglers as well as others — in order to put you on the scent? I disclosed to you that pipe to introduce liquids, established outside the Barrière du Trône, and coming into a house in the street."

"I know that," said Narcisse, interrupting Bras-Rouge; "but for one that you denounce, you allow ten to escape, and continue your traffic with impunity. I am sure you eat at two mangers, as the saying is."

"Oh, M. Narcisse, I am incapable of an appetite so dishonest!"

"That is not all: in the Rue du Temple, No. 17, there lives a woman named Burette, who lends money on deposit, who, they say, is a private receiver of stolen goods on your account."

"What would you have me do, M. Narcisse? The world is so slanderous, — says so many wicked things! Once again, I say, it is necessary for me to mix with as many rogues as possible, that I even seem one of themselves — so much the worse for them — in order that they may not have any suspicions; but it cuts me to the heart to imitate them, — cuts me to the heart. I must, indeed, be devoted to the service, to give myself up to such a thing as that."

"Poor, dear man! I pity you with all my soul!"

"You are laughing at me, M. Narcisse; but, if that was believed, why has there not been a search made at Mother Burette's and in my house?"

"You know well enough, — that we might not alarm the ruffians, whom, for so long a time, you have promised to deliver into our hands."

"And I am now about to deliver them, M. Narcisse; before an hour you will have them all handcuffed, and that without much trouble, for there are three women. As to Barbillon and Nicholas Martial, they are as savage as tigers, but as cowardly as pullets."

"Tigers or pullets," said Narcisse, half opening his long frock coat, and showing the butts of two pistols in

the pockets of his trousers, "I have wherewithal here for them."

"You will do well to have two of your men with you, M. Narcisse. When they see themselves caught, the most cowardly sometimes show fight."

"I shall station two of my men in the small parlour at the entrance, by the side of the room into which you are to introduce the jewel-matcher. At the first cry, I shall appear at one door, and my two men at the other."

"You must be speedy, then, for I expect the gang here every moment, M. Narcisse."

"Very well, I will go at once and place my men, provided that all this is not another humbug."

The conversation was cut short by the peculiar whistle intended as a signal. Bras-Rouge looked out of a window to see whom it was that Tortillard announced.

"Ah, ha! It is the Chouette already. Well, do you believe me now, M. Narcisse?"

"Why, this looks something like; but it is not all. But we shall see. And now to station my men."

And the agent of safety disappeared at a side door.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CHOUETTE.

The precipitation of the Chouette's step, the fierce throbbings of a fever of rapine and murder which still animated her, had suffused her hideous features with a deep purple, whilst her green eye sparkled with savage joy. Tortillard followed her, hopping and skipping. At the moment when she descended the last steps of the stairs, Bras-Rouge's son, from pure mischief, put his foot on the long and dragging skirts of the Chouette's gown. This sudden stoppage made the old woman stumble, and, unable to catch hold of the baluster, she fell on her knees, her two hands extended, and dropping her precious basket, whence escaped a gold bracelet set with emeralds and pearls. The Chouette having, in her fall, somewhat excoriated her fingers, picked up the bracelet, which had not escaped the keen sight of Tortillard, and, recovering her feet, turned furiously to the little cripple, who approached her with a hypocritical air, saying to her:

"Oh, dear me! Did your foot slip?"

Without making any reply, the Chouette seized Tortillard by the hair, and, stooping to a level with his cheek, she bit it with such fury that the blood spurted out beneath her teeth. Strange, however, Tortillard, in spite of his usual vindictiveness, in spite of feeling such intense pain, did not utter a murmur or a cry. He only wiped his bleeding cheek, and said, with a forced laugh:

"I hope next time you will not kiss me so hard, — eh, La Chouette?"

"Wicked little brat! Why did you tread on my gown on purpose to make me fall?"

"Me? Oh! How could you think so? I swear I didn't do it on purpose, my dear Chouette! Don't think your little Tortillard would do you any harm; he loves you too well for that. You should never beat him, or scold him, or bite him, for he is as fond of you as if he were a poor little dog, and you were his mistress!" said the boy, in a gentle and insinuating tone.

Deceived by Tortillard's hypocrisy, the Chouette believed him, and replied:

"Well, well, if I was wrong to bite you, why, let it go for all the other times you have deserved it, you little villain! But, *vive la joie!* To-day I bear no malice. Where is your old rogue of a father?"

"In the house. Shall I go and find him for you?"

"No; are the Martials here?"

"Not yet."

"Then I have time to go down and visit *fourline.* I want to speak to old No-Eyes."

"Will you go into the Schoolmaster's cellar?" inquired Tortillard, scarcely concealing his diabolical delight.

"What's that to you?"

"To me?"

"Yes, you ask me the question with such an odd air."

"Because I was thinking of something odd."

"What?"

"Why, that you ought, at least, to have brought him a pack of cards to pass away his time," replied Tortillard, with a cunning look; "that would divert him a little; now he has nothing to play at but not to be bitten by the rats; and he always wins at that game, and after awhile it becomes tiresome."

The Chouette laughed heartily at Tortillard's wit, and said to the cripple:

"Love of a baby boy to his mammy! I do not know any chap who has more vice than this scamp. Go and get me a candle, that you may light me down to see *fourline*, and you can help me to open his door. You know that I can hardly push it by myself."

"Well, no, it is so very dark in the cellar," said Tortillard, shaking his head.

"What! What! You who are as wicked as devil to be a coward? I like to see that, indeed! Go directly, and tell your father that I shall be with him almost immediately; that I am with *fourline;* and that we are talking of putting up the banns for our marriage. He, he, he!" added the disgusting wretch, grinning. "So make haste, and you shall be bridesman, and, if you are a good boy, you shall have my garter."

Tortillard went, with a sulky air, to fetch a light. Whilst she was waiting for him, the Chouette, perfectly intoxicated with the success of her robbery, put her hand into her basket to feel the precious jewels it enclosed. It was for the purpose of temporarily concealing this treasure that she desired to descend into the Schoolmaster's cellar, and not, according to her habit, to enjoy the torments of her new victim.

We will presently explain why, with Bras-Rouge's connivance, the Chouette had immured the Schoolmaster in the very subterranean cave into which this miscreant had formerly precipitated Rodolph.

Tortillard, holding a light, now appeared at the door of the cabaret. The Chouette followed him into the lower room, in which opened the trap with the folding-doors, with which we are already acquainted. Bras-Rouge's son, sheltering the light in the hollow of his hand, and preceding the old woman, slowly descended a stone staircase, which led to a sharp declivity, at the end of which was the thick door of the cellar which had so nearly

proved Rodolph's grave. When he reached the bottom of the staircase, Tortillard pretended to hesitate in following the Chouette.

"Well, now, you little vagabond, go on!" she said.

"Why, it is so dark; and you go so fast, Chouette! And, indeed, I'd rather go back again, and leave you the light."

"And then, foolish imp, how am I to open the cellar door by myself? Will you come on?"

"No, I am so frightened!"

"If I begin with you! Mind —"

"If you threaten me, I'll go back again!" and Tortillard retreated several paces.

"Well, listen to me, now, — be a good boy," said the Chouette, repressing her anger, "and I'll give you something."

"Well, what?" said Tortillard, coming up to her. "Speak to me so always, and I'll do anything you wish me, Mother Chouette."

"Come, come, I'm in a hurry!"

"Yes; but promise me that I may have some fun with the Schoolmaster."

"Another time; I haven't time to-day."

"Only a little bit, — just let me tease him for five minutes?"

"Another time; I tell you that I want to return up-stairs as quickly as possible."

"Why, then, do you want to open the door of his apartment?"

"That's no affair of yours. Come, now, have done with this. Perhaps the Martials are come by this time, and I must have some talk with them. So be a good boy, and you sha'n't be sorry for it. Come along."

"I must love you very much, Chouette, for you make me do just what you like," said Tortillard, slowly advancing.

The dim, wavering light of the candle, which but imperfectly lighted this gloomy way, reflected the black profile of this hideous brat on the slimy walls, which were full of crevices and reeking with damp. At the end of this passage, through the half obscurity, might be seen the low and crumbling arch of the entrance to the cellar, the thick door strengthened with iron bars, and, standing out in the shade, the red shawl and white cap of the Chouette.

By the united exertions of the two, the door opened harshly on its rusty hinges; a puff of humid vapour escaped from this den, as dark as midnight. The light, placed on the ground, threw its faint beams on the first steps of the stone staircase, the bottom of which was completely lost in the darkness. A cry, or, rather, a savage roar, came from the depths of the cave.

"Ah, there's *fourline* wishing his mamma good-morning!" said the Chouette, with a sneer.

And she descended several steps, in order to conceal her basket in some hole.

"I'm hungry!" exclaimed the Schoolmaster, in a voice that shook with rage; "do you wish to kill me like a mad dog?"

"What's the deary lovey hungry?" said the Chouette, with a laugh of mockery; "then smell its thumb."

There was a sound like that of a chain twisted violently; then a groan of mute, repressed passion.

"Take care! Take care, or you'll have a bump in your leg, as you had at Bouqueval farm, poor dear pa!" said Tortillard.

"He's right, the boy is, — keep yourself quiet, *fourline*," continued the hag; "the ring and chain are solid, old No-Eyes, for they came from Father Micou's, and he sells nothing but the best goods. It is your fault, too; why did you allow yourself to be bound whilst you were asleep? We only had then to put the ring and chain in

this place, and bring you down here in the cool to preserve you, old darling."

"That's a pity! He'll grow mouldy," said Tortillard.

Again the clank of the chain was heard.

"He, he, *fourline!* Why, he's dancing like a cockchafer tied by the claw," said the beldame, "I think I see him!"

"Cockchafer, cockchafer, fly away home! Fly, fly, fly! Your husband is the Schoolmaster!" sung Tortillard.

This increased the Chouette's hilarity. Having deposited her basket in a hole formed by the lowering of the wall of the staircase, she stood erect, and said:

"You see, *fourline* —"

"He don't see," said Tortillard.

"The brat's right. Will you hear, *fourline?* There was no occasion, when we came away from the farm, to be such a booby as to turn compassionate, and prevent me from marking Pegriotte's face with my vitriol; and then, too, you talked of your conscience, which was getting troubled. I saw you were growing lily-livered, and meant to come the 'honest dodge;' and so, some of these odd-come-shortlies, you would have turned 'nose' (informer), and have 'made a meal' of us, old No-Eyes; and then —"

"Then old No-Eyes will make a meal of you, for he is hungry, Chouette," said Tortillard, suddenly, and with all his strength pushing the old woman by her back.

The Chouette fell forward with a horrible imprecation. She might have been distinctly heard as she rolled from the top to the bottom of the staircase.

"Bump, bump, bump, bump! There's the Chouette for you — there she is! Why don't you jump upon her, old buffer?" added Tortillard.

Then, seizing the basket from under the stone where he had seen the old woman place it, he scampered up the stairs, exclaiming, with a shout of savage joy:

"Here's a pull worth more than that you had before, — eh, Chouette? This time you won't bite me till the blood comes, — eh? Ah, you thought I bore no spite — much obliged — my cheek bleeds still!"

"Oh, I have her! I have her!" cried the Schoolmaster, from the depth of the cave.

"If you have her, old lad, I cry snacks," said Tortillard, with a laugh.

And he stopped on the top step of the stairs.

"Help!" shrieked the Chouette, in a strangling voice.

"Thanks, Tortillard!" said the Schoolmaster, "thanks. And, to reward you, you shall hear the night-bird (Chouette) shriek! Listen, boy, — listen to the bird of death!"

"Bravo! Here I am in the dress-boxes!" said Tortillard, seating himself on the top of the stairs.

As he said this, he raised the light to endeavour to see the fearful scene which was going on in the depths of the cavern; but the darkness was too thick, so faint a light could not disperse it: Bras-Rouge's son could not see anything. The struggle with the Schoolmaster and the Chouette was mute, deadly, without a word, without a cry; only from time to time was heard the hard breathing, or the stifled groan, which always accompanies violent and desperate efforts. Tortillard, seated on the step, began to stamp his feet with that cadence peculiar to an audience impatient to see the beginning of a play; then he uttered the cry so familiar to the frequenters of the gallery of the minor theatres:

"Music! Music! Play up! Up with the curtain!"

"Oh, now I have hold of you, as I desired," murmured the Schoolmaster, from the recess of the cellar; "and you were going — "

A desperate movement of the Chouette interrupted him; she struggled with all the energy which the fear of death inspires.

"Louder! Can't hear!" bawled Tortillard.

"It is in vain you try to gnaw my hand, I will hold you as I like," said the Schoolmaster. Then, having, no doubt, succeeded in keeping the Chouette down, he added, "That's it! Now listen —"

"Tortillard, call your father!" shrieked the Chouette, with a faltering, exhausted voice. "Help! Help!"

"Turn her out, the old thing! She won't let us hear," said the little cripple, with a shout of laughter; "put her out!"

The Chouette's cries were not audible from this cavern, low as it was. The wretched creature, seeing that there was no chance of help from Bras-Rouge's son, resolved to try a last effort.

"Tortillard, go and fetch help, and I will give you my basket; it is full of jewels. There it is, under a stone."

"How generous! Thank ye, madame. Why, haven't I got it already? Hark! Don't you hear how it rattles?" said Tortillard, shaking it. "But now, if you'll give us half a pound of gingerbread nuts, I'll go and fetch pa."

"Have pity on me, and I will —"

The Chouette was unable to conclude. Again there was a profound silence. The little cripple again began to beat time on the stone staircase on which he was seated, accompanying the noise of his feet with the repeated cry:

"Why don't you begin? Up with the curtain! Music! Music!"

"In this way, Chouette, you can no longer disturb me with your cries," said the Schoolmaster, after a few minutes, during which he had, no doubt, gagged the old woman. "You know very well," he continued, in a slow, hollow voice, "that I do not wish to end this all at once; torture for torture! You have made me suffer enough, and I must speak at length to you before I kill

you, — yes, at length. It will be very terrible for you, agonising!"

"Come, no stuff and nonsense, old parson," said Tortillard, raising himself half up from his seat; "punish her, but don't do her any harm. You say you'll kill her, — that's only a hum; I am very fond of my Chouette; I have only lent her to you, and you must give her back again. Don't spoil her, — I won't have my Chouette spoiled, — if you do, I'll go and fetch pa!"

"Be quiet, and she shall only have what she deserves, a profitable lesson," said the Schoolmaster, in order to assure Tortillard, and for fear the cripple should go and fetch assistance.

"All right! Bravo! Now the play's going to begin!" said Bras-Rouge's son, who did not seriously believe that the Schoolmaster intended to kill the Chouette.

"Let us discourse a little, Chouette," continued the Schoolmaster, in a calm voice. "In the first place, you see, since that dream at the Bouqueval farm, which brought all my crimes before my eyes, since that dream, which did all but drive me mad, — which will drive me mad, for, in my solitude, in the deep isolation in which I live, all my thoughts dwell on this dream, in spite of myself, — a strange change has come over me; yes, I have a horror of my past ferocity. In the first place, I would not allow you to make a martyr of La Goualeuse, though that was nothing. Chaining me here in the cellar, making me suffer from cold and hunger, and detaining me for your wicked suggestions, you have left me to all the fear of my own reflections. Oh, you do not know what it is to be left alone, — always alone, — with a dark veil over your eyes, as the pitiless man said who punished me. Oh, it is horrid! It was in this very cavern that I flung him, in order to kill him; and this cavern is the place of my punishment, it may be my grave. I repeat that this is horrid! All that that man predicted to me has come to pass; he said to

me, 'You have abused your strength, — you will be the plaything, the sport of the most weak.' And it has been so. He said to me, 'Henceforward separated from the exterior world, face to face with the eternal remembrance of your crimes, one day you will repent those crimes.' And that day has come; the loneliness has purified me; I could not have believed it possible. Another proof that I am perhaps less wicked than formerly, is that I feel inexpressible joy in holding you here, monster! Not to avenge myself, but to avenge your victims, — yes, I shall have accomplished a duty when, with my own hands, I shall have punished my accomplice. A voice says to me, that, if you had fallen into my power earlier, much blood, much blood would have been spared. I have now a horror of my past murders; and yet, is it not strange? It is without fear, it is even with security, that I am now about to perpetrate on you a fearful murder, with most fearful refinements. Say, say! Do you understand that?"

"Bravo! Well played, old No-Eyes! He gets on," exclaimed Tortillard, applauding. "It is really something to laugh at."

"To laugh at?" continued the Schoolmaster, in a hollow voice. "Keep still, Chouette; I must complete my explanation as to how I gradually came to repentance. This revelation will be hateful to you, heart of stone, and will prove to you also how remorseless I ought to be in the vengeance which I should wreak on you in the name of our victims. I must be quick. My delight at grasping you thus makes my blood throb in my veins, — my temples beat with violence, just as when, by thinking of my dream, my reason wanders. Perhaps one of my crises will come on; but I shall have time to make the approaches of death frightful to you by compelling you to hear me."

"At him, Chouette!" cried Tortillard. "At him! And reply boldly! Why, you don't know your part.

Tell the 'old one' to prompt you, my worthy elderly damsel."

"It is useless for you to struggle and bite me," said the Schoolmaster, after another pause. "You shall not escape me, — you have bitten my fingers to the bone; but I will pull your tongue out, if you stir. Let us continue our discourse. When I have been alone — alone in the night and silence — I have begun to experience fits of furious, impotent rage; and, for the first time, my senses wandered. Oh! though I was awake, I again dreamed the dream — you know — the dream. The little old man in the Rue du Roule, the drowned woman, the cattle-dealer, and you — soaring over these phantoms! I tell you it was horrible! I am blind, and my thoughts assume a form, a body, in order to represent to me incessantly, and in a visible, palpable manner, the features of my victims. I should not have dreamed this fearful vision, had not my mind, continually absorbed by the remembrance of my past crimes, been troubled with the same fantasies. Unquestionably, when one is deprived of sight, the ideas that beset us form themselves into images in the brain. Yet sometimes, by dint of viewing them with resigned terror, it would appear that these menacing spectres have pity on me, — they grow dim — fade away — vanish. Then I feel myself awakened from my horrid dream, but so weak — cast down — prostrated — that — would you believe it? ah, how you will laugh, Chouette! — that I weep! Do you hear? I weep! You don't laugh? Laugh! Laugh! Laugh, I say!"

The Chouette gave a dull and stifled groan.

"Louder," said Tortillard; "can't hear."

"Yes," continued the Schoolmaster, "I weep, for I suffer and rage in vain. I say to myself, 'To-morrow, next day, for ever, I shall be a prey to the same attacks of delirium and gloomy desolation.' What a life! Oh, what a life! And I would not choose death rather

than be buried alive in this abyss which incessantly pervades my thoughts! Blind, alone, and a prisoner, — what can relieve me from my remorse? Nothing, nothing! When the fantasies disappear for a moment, and do not pass and repass the black veil constantly before my eyes, there are other tortures, — other overwhelming reflections. I say to myself, 'If I had remained an honest man, I should be at this moment free, tranquil, happy, beloved, and honoured by my connections, instead of being blind and chained in this dungeon at the mercy of my accomplices.' Alas! the regret of happiness lost from crime is the first step towards repentance; and when to repentance is joined an expiation of fearful severity, — an expiation which changes life into a long, sleepless night, filled with avenging hallucinations or despairing reflections, — perhaps then man's pardon succeeds to remorse and expiation."

"I say, old chap," exclaimed Tortillard, "you are borrowing a bit from M. Moissard's part! Come, no cribbing — gammon!"

The Schoolmaster did not hear Bras-Rouge's son.

"You are astonished to hear me speak thus, Chouette? If I had continued to imbrue myself either in bloody crimes or the fierce drunkenness of the life of the galleys, this salutary change would never have come over me I know full well. But alone, blind, stung with remorse, which eats into me, of what else could I think? Of new crimes, — how to commit them? Escape, — how to escape? And, if I escaped, whither should I go? What should I do with my liberty? No; I must henceforth live in eternal night, between the anguish of repentance and the fear of formidable apparitions which pursue me. Sometimes, however, a faint ray of hope comes to lighten the depth of my darkness, a moment of calm succeeds to my torments, — yes, for sometimes I am able to drive away the spectres which beset me by

opposing to them the recollections of an honest and peaceable past, by ascending in thought to my youthful days, to my hours of infancy. Happily, the greatest wretches have, at least, some years of peace and innocence to oppose to their criminal and blood-stained years. None are born wicked; the most infamous have had the lovely candour of infancy, — have tasted the sweet joys of that delightful age. And thus, I again say, I sometimes find a bitter consolation in saying to myself, 'I am, at this hour, doomed to universal execration, but there was a time when I was beloved, protected, because I was inoffensive and good. Alas! I must, indeed, take refuge in the past, when I can, for it is there only that I can find calm.'"

As he uttered these last words, the tones of the Schoolmaster lost their harshness; this man of iron appeared deeply moved, and he added:

"But now the salutary influence of these thoughts is such that my fury is appeased; courage, power will fail me to punish you. No, it is not I who will shed your blood."

"Well said, old buck! So, you see, Chouette, it was only a lark," cried Tortillard, applauding.

"No, it is not I who will shed your blood," continued the Schoolmaster; "it would be a murder, excusable perhaps, but still a murder; and I have enough with three spectres; and then — who knows? — perhaps one day you will repent also?"

And, as he spake thus, the Schoolmaster had mechanically given the Chouette some liberty of movement. She took advantage of it to seize the stiletto which she had thrust into her stays after Sarah's murder, and aimed a violent blow with this weapon at the ruffian, in order to disengage herself from him. He uttered a cry of extreme pain.

The ferocity of his hatred, his vengeance, his rage, his bloody instincts, suddenly aroused and exasperated

by this attack, now all burst forth suddenly, terribly, and carried with it his reason, already so strongly shaken by so many shocks.

"Ah, viper, I feel your teeth!" he exclaimed in a voice that shook with passion, and seizing, with all his might, the Chouette, who had thought thus to escape him. "You are in this dungeon, then?" he added, with an air of madness. "But I will crush the viper or screech-owl. No doubt you were waiting for the coming of the phantoms. Yes; for the blood beats in my temples, — my ears ring, — my head turns — as when they are about to appear! Yes; I was not deceived; here they are, — they advance from the depths of darkness, — they advance! How pale they are; and their blood, how it flows, — red and smoking! It frightens you, — you struggle. Well, be still, you shall not see the phantoms, — no, you shall not see them. I have pity on you; I will make you blind. You shall be, like me, — eyeless!"

Here the Schoolmaster paused. The Chouette uttered a cry so horrible that Tortillard, alarmed, bounded off the step, and stood up. The horrid shrieks of the Chouette served to place the copestone on the fury of the Schoolmaster.

"Sing," he said, in a low voice, "sing, Chouette, — night-bird! Sing your song of death! You are happy; you do not see three phantoms of those we have assassinated, — the little old man in the Rue du Roule, the drowned woman, the cattle-dealer. I see them; they approach; they touch me. Ah, so cold, — so cold! Ah!"

The last gleam of sense of this unhappy wretch was lost in this cry of condemnation. He could no longer reason, but acted and roared like a wild beast, and only obeyed the savage instinct of destruction for destruction. A hurried trampling was now heard, interrupted frequently at intervals with a heavy sound, which ap-

peared like a box of bones bounding against a stone, upon which it was intended to be broken. Sharp, convulsive shrieks, and a burst of hellish laughter accompanied each of these blows. Then there was a gasp of agony. Then — nothing.

Suddenly a distant noise of steps and voices reached the depths of the subterranean vault. Tortillard, frozen with terror by the fearful scene at which he had been present without seeing it, perceived several persons holding lights, who descended the staircase rapidly. In a moment the cave was full of agents of safety, led by Narcisse Borel. The Municipal Guards followed. Tortillard was seized on the first steps of the cellar, with the Chouette's basket still in his hand.

Narcisse Borel, with some of his men, descended into the Schoolmaster's cavern. They all paused, struck by the appalling sight. Chained by the leg to an enormous stone placed in the middle of the cave, the Schoolmaster, with his hair on end, his long beard, foaming mouth, was moving like a wild beast about his den, drawing after him by the two legs the dead carcase of the Chouette, whose head was horribly fractured. It required desperate exertions to snatch her from his grasp and manacle him. After a determined resistance they at length conveyed him into the low parlour of the cabaret, a large dark room, lighted by a solitary window. There, handcuffed and guarded, were Barbillon, Nicholas Martial, his mother and sister. They had been apprehended at the very moment when laying violent hands on the jewel-matcher to cut her throat. She was recovering herself in another room. Stretched on the ground, and hardly restrained by two men, the Schoolmaster, slightly wounded, but quite deranged, was roaring like a wild bull.

Barbillon, with his head hanging down, his face ghastly, lead-coloured, his lips colourless, eye fixed and savage, his long and straight hair falling on the collar of his blouse, torn in the struggle, was

seated on a bench, his wrists, enclosed in handcuffs, resting on his knees. The juvenile appearance of this fellow (he was scarcely eighteen years of age), the regularity of his beardless features, already emaciated and withered, were rendered still more deplorable by the hideous stamp which debauchery and crime had imprinted on his physiognomy. Impassive, he did not say a word. It could not be determined whether this apparent insensibility was owing to stupor or to a calm energy; his breathing was rapid, and, at times, he wiped away the perspiration from his pale brow with his fettered hands.

By his side was Calabash, whose cap had been torn off, and her yellowish hair, tied behind with a piece of tape, hung down in several scanty and tangled meshes. More savage than subdued, her thin and bilious cheeks were somewhat suffused, as she looked disdainfully at her brother, Nicholas, who was in a chair in front of her. Anticipating the fate that awaited him, this scoundrel was dejected. With drooping head and trembling knees he was overcome with fright; his teeth chattered convulsively, and he heaved heavy groans.

The Mother Martial, the only one unmoved, exhibited every proof that she had lost nothing of her accustomed audacity. With head erect, she looked unshrinkingly around her. However, at the sight of Bras-Rouge,— whom they brought into the low room, after having made him accompany the commissary and his clerk in the minute search they had made all over the place,— the widow's features contracted, in spite of herself, and her small and usually dull eyes lighted up like those of an infuriated viper; her pinched-up lips became livid, and she twisted her manacled arms. Then, as if sorry she had made this mute display of impotent rage, she subdued her emotion, and became cold and calm again.

Whilst the commissary and his clerk were writing

their depositions, Narcisse Borel, rubbing his hands, cast a satisfied look on the important capture he had made, and which freed Paris from a band of dangerous criminals; but, confessing to himself how useful Bras-Rouge had really been in the affair, he could not help casting on him an expressive and grateful look.

Tortillard's father was to share until after trial the confinement and lot of those he had informed against, and, like them, he was handcuffed; and even more than them did he assume a trembling air of consternation, twisting his weasel's features with all his might, in order to give them a despairing expression, and heaving tremendous sighs. He embraced Tortillard, as if he should find some consolation in his paternal caresses.

The little cripple did not seem much moved by these marks of tenderness; he had just learned that, for a time, he would be moved off to the prison for young offenders.

"What a misery to have a dear child!" cried Bras-Rouge, pretending to be greatly affected. "It is we two who are most unfortunate, madame, for we shall be separated from our children."

The widow could no longer preserve her calmness; and having no doubt of Bras-Rouge's treachery, which she had foretold, she exclaimed:

"I was sure it was you who had sold my son at Toulon. There, Judas!" and she spat in his face. "You sell our heads! Well, they shall see the right sort of deaths, — deaths of true Martials!"

"Yes; we shan't shrink before the carline (guillotine)," added Calabash, with savage excitement.

The widow, glancing towards Nicholas, said to her daughter, with an air of unutterable contempt:

"That coward there will dishonour us on the scaffold!"

Some minutes afterwards the widow and Calabash,

accompanied by two policemen, got into a hackney-coach to go to St. Lazare; Barbillon, Nicholas, and Bras Rouge were conveyed to La Force, whilst the Schoolmaster was conveyed to the Conciergerie, where there are cells for the reception of lunatics.

END OF VOLUME IV.

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